

Profit of Godliness,

Set forth in five SERMONS,
on 1 TIM. 4. 8.

THE Unprofitableness of Worldly Gain.

Set forth in four SERMONS,
on MARK 8. 36, 37.

The Parable of the Barren Fig-Tree, Opened and Applied, in seven SER- MONS, on LUK. 13. 6, 7, 8, 9.

VICTORIOUS VIOLENCE.

Or Two SERMONS ON
MATTH. II. 12.

By that Eminent and Learned Divine Mr. Thomas Byrdall,
M. A. late Minister of the Word, and Preacher
at Walsall in the County of Stafford. 8^o 2. 33. 77.

Terreni nihil putant utile, nisi quod manibus teneri potest.
Lucret.

That is the best Reason which makes most for Religion; that is
the best policy which makes most for Piety. Papinian, ad
Politian

LONDON, Printed for Nevil Simmons Bookseller in
Kedderminster. 1666.



THE
P R O F I T
OF
G O D L I N E S S.

Set forth in Five Ser-
mons on *1 Tim. 4. 8.*

Wherein many weighty Que-
stions touching the promises
of Godliness are judiciously
Resolved.

By that Eminent and Learned Di-
vine, Mr. *Thomas Byrdall, M. A.*
late Minister of the Word, and
Preacher at *Walsall*, in the County
of *Stafford.*

L O N D O N,
Printed *Anno Dom. 1666.*





To the Right Worship-
full Sir *Thomas Wilbraham* of
Woodhey, in the County of
Chester, Baronet; And to the
Vertuous Lady, the Lady
Elizabeth Wilbraham his Wife.



Attred and scorn is the
portion of Godliness
in this life; wicked
men will bestow no
better thing upon her.

In all Ages, hatred,
scoffs, persecutions, have been the ill
Genit of Godliness: it was *Calvins*
speech to the King of *France*, *oalum*
est Evangelis Genus; Malice and

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persecution stand by Godly men, as the Dragon stood by the Woman that was ready to be delivered of her Child as soon as it was born, *Rev. 12*: so Malice stands by Godly men, as soon as they are adopted and called the Sons of God. As *Pharaoh* commanded the Hebrew Midwives to destroy the male Children of the Hebrews, as soon as they came forth from the Womb, but the Hebrew daughters should live; so doth the World put men upon destroying the sons of God; but for the Hebrew daughters (such as fashion themselves according to this World) they let them live quietly.

Indeed this is not to be wondered at, because of the contrariety of the courses of Godly and wicked men, and contrariety of affections: that which makes a Godly man to weep and mourn, makes a wicked man to laugh and sing; and that which most of all rejoyceth the heart of the Godly,

*Maxima
causa dis-
cordiarum
est diversi-
tas volun-
tatum.
Salvian.*

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Godly, is that which grieveth and vexeth the hearts of the wicked; the discourses of Mammon do rejoyce the worldly man, and do not much affect a Godly man; the discourse of Christ pleaseth a Godly man, but it is irksome to a wicked man; that which a wicked man most shunneth, a Godly man prosecuteth with the greatest love and desires: that which a Godly man most hateth and abhorreth, that a wicked man most loveth and desireth: And as there is a contrariety of affections, so of courses and conversations; the one walketh to *Agypt*, the other to *Canaan*: the one hath communion with *Belial*, the other with Christ: the one hath fellowship with darkness, and walketh in darkness; the other hath fellowship with the light: it was the saying of one, *In eadem urbe sum Antipodes*; there are *Antipodes* in the same City: so I may say, the feet and wayes of the God-

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ly are opposite to the feet and wayes
of wicked men. Our Saviour gives
us the main reason of the worlds ha-
tred of the Godly, viz. because they
are not of the world, Joh. 15. 19.
*If you were of the world, the world
would love its own: but because you
are not of the world, but I have
chosen you out of the world, there-
fore the world hateth you: every word
is remarkable: If you were of the
world] if you (like the world)
should lie in sin: if you (like the
men of this world) should fashion
your selves to the world, and run
into all excess of riot with wicked
men, then the world would love you;
καὶ κόσμος τοῖς ἰδοῦν ἐφίλει. The world would
love you as part of her own; the
world would gather you under her
wings: but Godly men are not of
the world; here they live in the
world, but are not of it. As St. Paul
saith of wicked men in the Church,
that they are in Israel, but are not of
Israel;*

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Israel ; so the Godly are in the world, are not of the world : how cometh it to pass they are not of the world ? Christ saith, *I have chosen you out of the world* ; the Lord calls out those who belong to him, from among the wicked ; he calls them from that state wherein they were born, to a state of Godliness: *he hath set apart for himself the man that is Godly*, Psal. 4. 3. *הפלה* signifies, he hath marvelously separated or selected them after a wonderful manner ; he hath culled them out from among men, as with some sign of excellency.

Now although the world hates them, yet the Lord loveth them: 1. He takes them into inward and special covenant with his Majesty, giving himself to them for their God, and taking them for his own people : others shall have the sure Plagues of *Cain*, when as the Godly shall have the sure mercies of *David* bestowed

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on them. 2. He redeems them out of the hand of all their Enemies : this was the glorious mark of separation given to the type, Exod. 8. 23. *I will put a division between my people and thy people*, saith *Moses* to *Pharaoh* from the Lord : the word is [*Redemption*] the LXX. translate it [*Distinction*.] The Chaldee Paraphrast is excellent, I will put a marvellous redemption in my people, and upon thy people I will bring a Plague : by this is shadowed out our glorious redemption by Jesus Christ from our spiritual thralldom ; God sends redemption to his people, and sends the Plague of damnation on the slaves of sin and Satan. 3. He sanctifies them, which is twofold, either by sanctifying their natures, and so fits and prepares them to every good work, to all spiritual duties and services ; or secondly, by furnishing them with some choice abilities, and extraordinary gifts, enabling them to

LXX. Interpret.
Chald. Paraph. in
Exod. 8. 23.

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to some more noble functions and employments in the Church, as *David, Jeremiah, Paul, &c.*

Moreover, the Godly are they on whom he confers his choicest blessings, Blessing them with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ, *Eph. 1. 3.* Here is a mine of gold that we cannot digg to the bottom of : it is said, He bleſſeth us] this is a marvellous mercy : he bleſſeth us with spiritual blessings :] this is transcendently marvellous : the wicked shall not partake of so much as a drop of them : they may be fed with common favours more than his children ; yet God is so chary, that not a crumb shall fall from the table of his spiritual blessings upon them : And then it is not said, he doth bless us with some, but with all spiritual blessings] with all kinds of blessings : and then it is said ; [in Heavenly places] because they come from Heaven, and in

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heaven the fulness of them is reserved for the godly : one drop of the dew of Heaven is more worth than Rivers of the fatness of the earth : spiritual, heavenly blessings are blessings truly and properly. It is observable from *Gen. 27. 39.* that albeit *Isaac* gave to *Esau* the fatness of the earth, yet he did not call it a blessing, because *Esau* had no spiritual blessings with it : Heaven without earth makes a man blessed, but earth without Heaven cannot : in *Abraham* we are heirs of this world, *Rom. 4. 14.* in Christ we are heirs of the world to come. The godly likewise are persons with whom God will converse, and in whose communion he will take special delight, *1 John 1. 3.* he will sup with them, and they with him, *Rev. 3. 20.* the Lord will (as it were) feed on their graces, and they shall feed on his comforts : there are two notable words in the Greek; *2 Cor. 6. 16.* to set forth Gods delight

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light in conversing with them. *ἐνοικήσω ἐν αὐτοῖς*, there are two Propositions, *I will in dwell in them*: implying, what intimacy there is between them: the other word in the Greek, is, *ἐμπεριπατήσω*, *I will walk round about them*: In *Prov. 8. 31.* it is said, his *Shagna-
shugnai.* delights are with them, *Isa. 52. 4.* they are called *Chepzibah*, for the Lord delighteth in them; as for the ungodly, he regardeth them not; *he knoweth the proud afar off.* The godly also are persons whose services shall please him: God will have some servants in the world; and they are the people whom he hath formed for himself, they shall shew forth his praise, *Isa. 43. 31.* he calls their prayers his delights, whereas the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to him: for indeed nothing but godliness fits men for serving God. Moreover, the godly are persons over whom God will have special care in the day of

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their distress : he is ready to hear them, when they cry to him in the time of their trouble, to comfort them in tribulation and sorrow, to protect them in danger, to deliver them out of trouble, to make them triumph over their insulting opposers : *Tertullian* calls a Christian, *curam divini ingenii, & candidatum Angelorum* : Yea, it is the joy of God to do them all good, *Jerem.* 22. 31. on the godly he will also magnifie the riches of his grace and glory, to the praise of his glorious grace : therefore they are called vessels of mercy, whom he will fill up to the brim with glorious mercy, *Rom.* 9. 23. he hath made them his heirs, even heirs of all his rich and precious promises, heirs of his Kingdom, heirs of salvation, heirs of the riches of his glory, *Eph.* 1. 18. they are persons who shall live with him, and enjoy him, and whom he will

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will enjoy whiles eternity lasteth.

Godliness is profitable unto all things as the ensuing discourse of our reverend Author will largely shew you: there is an universal fruit, benefit and profit in Godliness; it turneth all it toucheth, not into gold, but into that which is far better; it is of that sovereign vertue, that it makes a profitable use of all that it is applied unto; it alters the very nature of things, making things in their own nature hurtful, to become helpful and advantagions.

Godliness is profitable to a man in all parts of his life; I speak of Godliness in the truth and power of it.

1. Even in the first Age, even in Childhood, it will teach even Children to cry Hosanna to the Lord; *Matth. 21. 16, 17.* it seasoneth the heart betimes with the dew of Heaven. 2. It makes a man to remember his Creator in the dayes of his

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The word
cleansing
signifies
the clean-
sing of
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young
man is
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to glass,
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filth even
in the Sun
beams.

youth, and to employ the strength of his life to the glory of his Creator, while yet the evil dayes come not: Youth and Childhood is the seed time of grace and goodness, and the whole lump of our lives is sanctified by the sanctification of these first-fruits. As the younger sort of people is subject to much vanity and many temptations; so godliness is very profitable for that age, making the young man to * cleanse his way, by taking heed thereunto according to Gods word, *Psal. 119. 9.* 3. Godliness is profitable for the riper years of man; it is profitable to establish the heart with grace at that age, and to keep it from being stollen away from God by the creature; it then makes a man more solicitous of remembring God himself, seeing he is hastening apace into ruinous old age. 4. Godliness is profitable for the last part of a mans life,

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life, viz. old age : it is for comfort to it ; old age is subject to many grievances ; *there will evil dayes come, wherein they shall say they have no pleasure* : there are many decayes and infirmities of nature in old men, which make their dayes evil and unpleasant, when the clouds return after the rain, and the end of one trouble is the beginning of another ; when the Cross is a burden, and small matters are burdensome to them ; now godliness is profitable in this regard, it yields ground of special comfort in old age, because a godly man knows when this earthly Tabernacle shall be dissolved, he hath a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens : When a soul hath been long acquainted with Christ, and desireth to be dissolved, to be with Christ, which is best of all, Oh what comfort is this to his sou^l, when he finds that

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that the day of his redemption draweth nigh! Godliness is profitable also for strength in old age: for as their outward man decayeth, so their inner man grows stronger and stronger: then is the life of faith, and the power of grace more strong and vigorous in them, to put health in sickness, strength in weakness, ease in pain: we read of those worthies, Heb. II. *that out of weakness they were made strong by faith*: they are fat and flourishing in grace, and bring forth more fruit in old age: Godliness is also for an honor to old age: the pride of youth is apt to cast scorn and contempt upon old age, which it ought to honour, but *Gray hairs are a Crown of honour, when they are found in a way of righteousness and godliness* Prov. 16 31. But
4. Most profitable is death to the godly, 1 Cor. 3. 21. *All things are yours*, saith the Apostle; among

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among these all things he reckoneth *Death* : to the ungodly it may be said, *you are Death's*, but death is not yours. As it may be said of souldiers taken in battel, they are not their own men, but are prisoners lying at the mercy of the enemy : so death takes the ungodly, they are deaths prisoners and captives : but to the godly I may say, *death is yours, your friend, your servant*, to let you into happiness ; *Death is the Porter of the presence chamber* ; it admits the godly in to see and know God as he is. When *Jacob* heard that his son *Joseph* was alive, his spirit revived ; and *Israel* said, *it is enough* ; *Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die* : and with what joy was *Jacob* affected when he saw his son, whom he had thought long before to have been a prey to some cruel beast ? When death cometh, a godly man saith it is enough, it is

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is enough ; My godliness and Christ
ever liveth : Oh let me die, that I
may go and see the sweet and glo-
rious face of my blessed Redeemer:
and cryes out as a dying godly man
once did , Come ye fiery Chariots
and catch me up into Heaven where
I may see God ; Come ye blessed
Angels and carry me upon your
wings to the sight and presence of
the Lord ; or as St. *Augustines* Mo-
ther , *Volemus in cælum, Volemus in*
cælum ; Come, let us fly, let us fly
to heaven : a godly man saith to
the day of death, *O Beata dies*, O
blessed day, when I shall enter into
my Masters joy ! Finally, Godli-
ness is profitable to eternity , John
15. 16. *I have ordained you* (saith
Christ to his Disciples) *that you*
should go, and bring forth fruit, and
that your fruit should remain. The
fruit of godliness is not like Sum-
mer fruit, that perisheth, but it re-
maineth

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maineth, it is everlasting joy and glory; Oh how sweet shall the remembrance of godliness be to the Saints for ever, and ever! These things being considered, I cannot but wonder with *Chrysostome*, that that man doth not digg a pit in the ground to hide his head in, that shall dare to open his mouth, and speak against Godliness.

Now much honoured Sir, to you and to your Worthy Lady, do I dedicate this Tract of the Profit of Godliness, together with the three other Discourses annexed; the first shewing the Unprofitableness of Worldly Gain; the second shewing the danger of being an Unfruitful Tree in Gods Vineyard; the last shewing that none but the violent Christian doth obtain the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let me exhort you to grow in grace, and to increase in godliness;
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it is observed, that in Scripture there are more exhortations to a good life than to faith: there is no Ornament doth so well become you as godliness; as the Gold Ring decketh the Pearl that is embossed in it; the Silver Coyne sets out the stamp that is engraven in it; the sweet face commends the amorous eye that rolleth in it; the Royal Robe gives a lustre to the Prince that is invested in it; the glorious Heaven beautifies the Sun that is enthroned in it; so doth godliness adorn and beautifie him that hath it. Beware of unlawful Gain, for that will make a mans Bread to be as gravel between his teeth, and his drink as wormwood to his taste. Labour I beseech you to abound in all the fruits of righteousness; it is better to be in your Countrey as Trees in a Garden bearing fruit, then as Trees in a Waste, to make a shew and shadow

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dow only. Oh how doth the Devil teach many Great Persons to sin now a little, and then a little, and to trifle away the greatest part of their time about unnecessary things, till at last they become rich in sin, and bankrupt in grace ! Sin will thrive in your souls, if grace doth not. Offer ye Violence to the Kingdom of Heaven, since none but the violent do take the City of God : *Appetitus summi boni est infinitus* ; that which a man makes his chiefest good, his desire of it is unsatiable, and he laboureth with all his might to obtain it. *Violentia rapiscens.* The Lord hath enriched you with abundance of earthly comforts, and that (as the daughter of *Caleb* when *Joshua* had given them the dry land, went to *Caleb* for the upper springs, and for the nether Springs ;) so you may go to the Fountain of life for the upper springs, and may be alwayes replenished

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nished with heavenly comforts, is and
shall be the prayer of

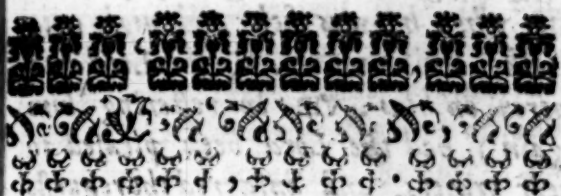
Much Honoured Sir
and Madam

January 10.
1664.

Your obliged and most affectionate
servant in the Gospel,

William Gearing.

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A Speech delivered to the Inhabitants of *Walsall*, April 30. 1662. at the close of the Sermon preached at the Funerals of the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Byrdall*, late Minister of *Walsall*: By that Eminent and Learned Divine Mr. *Anthony Burgess*, late of *Sutton Coldfield* in *Warwickshire*.



Y^e *OU* that are the Inhabitants of this Town; met here together upon this sad occasion, let me speak a little to you of our sad meeting at this time: had the Lord done that which the Apostle
(b) acknow-

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acknowledged concerning Epaphroditus, when he was sick and nigh unto death, Phil. 2. 27. (the Lord had mercy on him, viz. in restoring him again) had the Lord been pleased to hear prayers, and answered the requests that were put up, you had not lost a Pastor, we had not lost a dear friend and relation: but the will of the Lord is done. And now Funeral Sermons are for the living, not for the dead; like your flowers upon the Corpse, not for the Corpse, but for those that have the smell of them; therefore it is my way (for the most part) to wave to speak of those that are departed; yet I do not so tie up my self, as not to speak something upon such an occasion as this of a Godly Minister, and faithful Brother, whose life and death speaketh.

If I do a little improve this sad occasion, pardon me; This our Brother was dear to me, not only upon the account of the relation as a Minister, but
also

also of a particular relation to my self, which it may not seem in vain to speak of. When it pleased God to call me into these parts to undertake such a great charge as the care of souls, then this our Reverend Brother, and your dear Pastor came as Collegiat with me; he did not stay long there, but was chosen your Pastor and Minister; and now, if so be that in the speaking of him, a little grief doth any way interrupt me, do not think it unmanly. . Our Saviour Christ did discover his tears about Lazarus, and the Jews said, Behold how he loved him! So if in speaking of such a relation, such an acquaintance, and such a loss, there be any interruption, it is not unmanly.

John 11.
35, 36.

I have but two things to speak to; As he that commendeth a Picture or Image, doth not so much commend that, as the Artificer that made it; so if I tell you, what gifts, abilities, graces God wrought in this your Pastor, it is

not so much to speak of him; as of God
in him, and to glorifie God. And
therefore I shall speak (and that
but briefly) to two things, viz.

To his Preaching ;
To his Life ;

those two things being the Urim and
Thummim for the building up of
Minister. As for his Preaching,

1. It was an able, Scriptural, in-
structing preaching; it is great pro-
ficiency in any people to know what
good Preaching, and what are good
Sermons; now this one thing, the
ability and dexterity of
a Minister in applying of Scripture
to peoples hearts; he that instructeth
and convinceth by Scripture, he that
reproveth, that comforteth by Scripture,
he cometh with [Thus saith the Lord]
and the wit of man cannot overcome
him: Thus saith the Lord; and then
the lust and pride of man, and all
must

of God must yield. Now this our Brother was
such a Preacher; A man may be an ex-
cellent Scholar, and yet want dexteri-
ty of preaching; Where there is a great
deal of learning, there is not alwayes
this dexterity: Our Brother was a
Disputant, which signifies, one that hath
skill in Scripture, one that instructeth,
enliveneth, enflameth: so that when a
man cometh and heareth such a man, he
saith, Verily this man hath more than
in Books, learning, parts: he hath God in his
heart and tongue, working in him and
with him: that is one thing; the do-
ctrinal abilities of this our Brother in
this way of preaching which you can
witness.

2. The second thing was his use-
ful, practical, profitable, and power-
ful preaching: the Sower went out to
sow Wheat: not Chaff, but Seed-wheat;
and now this you may witness too,
that our Brothers preaching was a use-
ful, powerful, practical way, in all
things tending to your edification: so
(b 3) what

what purpose is it for a man to have a golden tongue, if the heart be not enflamed therewith? and therefore this way of practical preaching, whereby the Kingdome of sin is destroyed, and grace begotten, and people edified, this is the great, the excellent way. Eloquence is commendable, and Divinity doth not renounce it, but it becometh subservient to heavenly preaching, if it be the handmaid. But there is little in affected words and charms of meer Bumbaste: though many men may delight to hear them, yet give me that which will rather make thy heart weep, than thine ears to tingle; that which will send thee home, and make thee cry, Oh I cannot sleep for my sins! that which will make thee cry out, Oh my sin, my sin! as David cried out of his Son, O Absolom, my Son, my Son! this affectionate way is the powerful and profitable way.

This our Brother did use all kinds of wayes of preaching: he tried a Metaphysical

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taphysical and a Rhetorical way of Preaching, (I mean according to humane wayes) and he saw that would do no good ; therefore he betook himself to a powerful, practical way of preaching, that way whereby the mind is enlightened, and the heart wrought upon, and this was our Brothers preaching. Oh it is better to speak one word to edification, then five hundred words in a meer vain, empty, fantastical way !

3. His preaching was affectionate, serious, inward ; it was more than Books or words, more then studied words, and learned Sermons, though these be necessary, and of great use (mistake me not) it was inward and affectionate ; it was with inward workings of heart, with love to God, with love to your souls, and to the edification of them : this is a great matter when we come (as the Apost.e saith) in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit : though we come with learning and all lawfull arts, yet there

is more ; the heart and the affection in
of a Preacher is more : this warm
milk from the breast is that which
nourisheth the Child : for a man to
speak of regeneration, and himself not
know what it is for a Minister to
preach of living by faith ; and other
truths , and for himself not to know
the meaning of them experimentally,
what is it but even as Sampson's Li-
on ? he had honey in his mouth, yet was
a dead carcass , so that he was never
the better for it , he tasted it not : so
let a Minister deliver never so excel-
lent divine truths ; if he have not the
working of these upon his own heart,
he is but as Sampsons dead Lion with
honey in his mouth ; he speaks that he
knows not the meaning of.

4. His preaching was constant, di-
ligent, assiduous preaching : these very
walls, this very place can tell you how
diligent he was in preaching. His dili-
gence appeared that notwithstanding
the pain he felt , yet he was constant
in

lection in preaching to you: he hath been in
warm torment in his body, and in great pain,
which whiles he was in declaring the will of
an to God unto you: this declared his con-
f not stancy and diligence, that he would
r to not spare the pains of his body, nor
other the torture he had, but travelled in
know soul and body for you at the same time
ally, together; thus much for his Preach-
Li ing.

was As for his Life, your selves also
ver are witnesses of a holy life, which is
c. so the great commendation of Gods ser-
cel- vants. It was the great complaint of
the Luther, nothing made him so weary
rt, of his Ministry as this, I cannot live
ith as I have Preached; And truly no-
be thing may affect a godly Minister so
much as this, that he cannot live as
di- he preacheth: that he cannot put forth
ry those works of grace which he declares
ow to others: Ministers are not Angels;
i- we are not freed from infirmities; but
g. God by his good grace keeps those that
nt are faithful, that they are unspotted
n in

in the world. I dare not to be of the Donatists mind, that thought that the Administration of Sacraments, and the Preaching of ungodly Ministers, could not be of Edification to Regeneration or Conversion: no, the Church hath exploded that Opinion; for that would be to make the Promises of God to be made not to the Institution it self, nor to the right disposition of the subject employed therein, but to the qualification of the Minister, and the Dispenser thereof: Whereas we see the Scripture is otherwise: Yet it is certain that the prophaneſs of Eli's Sons made the people to abhor the sacrifice of God: therefore drunkenness, profaneſs, wickedness, unprofitableness in a Minister, are great aggravations of their sin. As a deformed Limner drawing a curious Picture, makes himself the more ridiculous; so the better Sermons a prophane Minister preacheth, he doth but make himself the more ridiculous; he sheweth what himself should

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should be, but is not: But now by the grace of God our dear Brother his life was a confirmation of his doctrine; you know it among you, and it was convincing of you: Our lives ordered with all tenderness and prudence according to the will of God, are convincing, converting and teaching lives.

And the Lord to increase his graces, and to exercise his faith and patience, was pleased in his latter dayes to afflict him with that sad and grievous pain of the Stone, and the consequences thereof; a pain so great, that one of the Philosophers was of the judgement, that all pain was but a Phantasie, and a meer imagination, yet being under the pain of the Stone (as I remember) he cryed out, he was deceived: It pleased the Lord to exercise our dear Brother thus, afflicting him with this disease, and that a long time together, and so made him as it were a Prisoner in his house: he
was

was often afraid that he should die
a miserable, tormenting, painful
death: it was his great fear because
of the torturing pain that was upon
him: but behold the mercy and good-
ness of God to him, that gave him
an easie death, so that he scarce felt
what pain was: see how often we trou-
ble our selves with needless fears,
which the Lord never brings upon us!
Thus our friend feared a tormenting
death, and it pleased God to deal othe-
rwise with him. Death hath now cut
him down, he is fallen to the ground:
Oh his fall! Your Pastor is gone, and
hath now finished his course, about the
five and fiftieth year of his age: I
judge it by my own, he was a little
younger then I: yet although he set out
after me, he hath over-gone me: he
died as I have observed, in the best of
ages, about fifty five, the best time to
die being then, as one that hath had
the Wine of this life, and goeth out of
the world without the dreggs of it:
and

and thus the Lord hath disposed of him,
and brought him to Heaven, tears
cannot bring him back again: he would
not come hither again if he might: he
is in glory and happiness: there is on-
ly this to be said, Nevertheless for him
to have abode in the flesh was needful
for you: Are not the Sun, Moon, and
Stars needful? are not light and salt
needful? to these are faithful Ministers
in Scripture compared.

I have a word of Exhortation to you,
viz. to humble your souls under this hand
of God: it is sin that makes us unpro-
fitable and unfruitful, and that causeth
God to say not only of the barren, but
(even as now) of the fruitful tree,
Cut it down. Under the Law, when
a City was to be besieged, God took care
that no fruitfull trees should be destroy-
ed, no Axe was to be forced against
them, Deut. 20. 19. yet notwithstand-
ing the Lord hath done it to you: Oh
that we were so wise, that we could prize
mercies rather by the enjoyment, than
by


by the want of them : It is pitiful to say,
Give us our Minister, give us our Byr-
dall again : it is as to say, let the Sun
come back again : therefore humble your
selves under this sad Providence : and
say, Hath not my contempt of the Word,
my unprofitableness, my ingratitude been
as so many blows to cut this tree down !
the Lord forgive it me, and pardon me.
And although he be now dead, yet let
his Sermons, let his Exhortations live :
as Paul said to the Corinthians, 2 Cor.
3. 2. Ye are our Epistle written in
our hearts, known and read of all
men : So you of this Town of Walsall,
you have your Pastors Sermons written
in your hearts and lives : the whole
Country knoweth that you have had a
Prophet among you : you must one day
answer for every Sermon he preached
among you : you must be accountable for
all his studies, for all the pains he took
and endured, for all the strength and
blood that he spent, for the life he spent
in doing good to your souls : these things
you

say, you must come to an account for : there-
fore entreat ye the Lord that he would
make you sensible of these things, and
that they may be useful to you for your
good ; And now therefore seeing the Will
of the Lord is done, be earnest with God
that he would provide such a Pastor for
you, that what your deceased Pastor plan-
ted, he that shall succeed may water, and
the great God of Heaven give increase.
Amen.

THE

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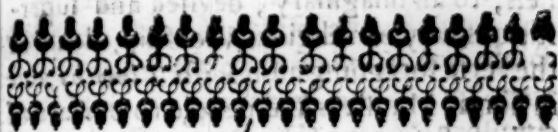
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THE PROFIT OF GODLINESS.

I TIMOTHY 4. 8.

But Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Serm. 1. Preached at Walsall. Nov 3. 1661.

CHAP. I.



He Apostle by experience, and
Prophetical foresight, know-
ing how prone men were,
and would be in all ages to
hearken to vain Opinions;
and cunningly devised Fables, tending to
draw men from the exercise of true Godli-
ness,

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ness, to an imaginary, devised and superstitious way of religious Worship, both in the verse foregoing admonish *Timothy*, and in small Ministers and people to beware of such doctrines and practices; *verse 7. Refuse prophane and old wives fables, and exercise thy self rather to Godliness.* As who should say, When thou hearest or readest such doctrines and opinions, shun them, reject them; for though they may have a great shew of devotion, yet they are but fables; yea they are prophane, and of no more worth than old wives fables are. Some understand by fables, Jewish traditions whereof the Jewish *Talmud* is yet full, and which he foretells, that even Christians would imbrace in after-ages; others understand by fables, the doctrines of Hereticks; for such he speaks of, *verse 3. forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats*, which are to this day the doctrines of the Romish Church. Now the only ready way to shun these fables, is to give up our selves to the constant exercise of true commanded Godliness; shun these fables, and exercise thy self to Godliness; make it thy work, and one thing necessary, to study the doctrine and practice which is according to Godliness.

Now my Text is the reason why every Christian should refuse all corrupt doctrines and practices in Religion, and addict themselves to the only exercise of true Religion; Because bodily exercise profiteth little, *But Godliness is profitable unto all things.*

In this verse three things lie obvious to your observation.

1. A proposition.] *Bodily exercise profiteth little.*

2. A double opposition } Of things.
 } Of effects.

1. Of things.] Godliness is opposed to bodily exercise.

2. The effect of Godliness is opposed to the effect of bodily exercise: The Apostle saith, *Bodily exercise profiteth little: but Godliness is profitable unto all things.*

3. The reason is expressed; because it *hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

CHAP. II.

I Shall explain these words, then
I mend a point to your observation.

Quest. 1.

Resp. 1.

What is meant by *bodily exercise*?

It is not meant of bodily labour in our Mechanick Callings, neither is it to be understood of bodily exercises of pleasure, as running, riding, wrestling, hunting, shooting, to which men addict themselves for health and pleasure. The Apostle treats not (*as an Artificer or Physician*) of matters which concern our health, or worldly commerce; but *as a Divine*, of things in which the power, truth and life of Godliness consisteth.

2. By bodily exercises are understood all those actions and external practices, in which men place Religion; as abstinence from meats, marriage, watching, fasting, wearing sackcloth, lying on the ground, likewise all devout acts that men do, which have a great shew of piety; and are much commended by Papists to this day; that man that leads an austere life, that fasteth much, that abstaineth from meats and drinks, that observeth dayes, and Canonical hours, and in a Monkish manner re-
nounceth

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nounceth the world, is eminently godly among the Papists, he is reputed as an Angel dropt down from Heaven.

But this austere discipline, the Apostle, in contempt, calleth *Bodily exercises*.

1. Because the body, and not the soul is the subject of them.

2. Because the body is only tamed, but the soul is not bettered by them: the body is kept down, the soul is still loose, prophane, and unsanctified. It is worth our observing, what the Apostle calleth such devotion, *vers. 7.* he calleth them *prophane fables*; in *vers. 1.* he calls them *doctrines of Devils*. All doctrines of abstinence from meats, and forbidding marriage, commanding and enjoining these bodily exercises, are doctrines not of God, but of Devils; there is no religion nor holiness in them, though they seem very religious; there is no Godliness in them, though they seem very godly: for the Apostle, in my text, doth oppose Godliness to these devout bodily exercises, plainly noting that they are not Godliness.

What is meant by profiting little?

It is as much as if the Apostle had said; these bodily exercises may and do a little benefit your body, by suppressing

*Quest. 1.
Resp. 1.*

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the vigorous stirrings of your lusts, it may restrain the acts of sin; for men pamper their lusts, when they pamper their bodies; *men* nourish their lusts, in nourishing their bodies with meats and drinks, and some ease; this is some profit in this bodily exercise: but yet it is *but little*.

1. Because it tames the body without sanctifying the heart.

2. *It is little*, because it is but for a little time.

3. *It is but little*, because it pleaseth men, but it is not acceptable unto God without inward holiness.

4. *It is but little*, because it is but useful only for the taming of concupiscence; it is not profitable for all things.

5. *It is but little*, because it is as good as nothing; it amounts to little, even to just nothing.

Quest. 3.
Resp. 1.

What is meant by Godliness?

Godliness is taken for the doctrine of Godliness, 1 Timothy 3. 16. *Great is the mystery of Godliness*; that is, the doctrine of Godliness, which *vers. 9.* he calls *the mystery of Faith*.

2. For the external duties of Godliness toward God, 1 Tim. 2. 2. *In all Godliness and Honesty*: We lead a life in all Godliness, when

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when we give God his due; and in Honesty, when we give man his due: and among those, the duties which we perform to Parents and Kindred, is in a more special manner called Godliness, 1 Tim. 5. 4. *Let them learn to shew Godliness to their own house:* which text, if well considered, will plainly evince, that Godliness is very rare, where the profession of Godliness is eminent: how few are there who make conscience of doing duties to Parents and Kindred which nature bindeth us to perform.

3. Godliness is taken for the whole Christian duty of religion, doctrine, and practice and worship, 2 Pet. 3. 11. *seeing all these things perish;* What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? In the Greek it is in the plural number, in all holy Conversations and Godlinesses; and so it is taken in this place. The Greek word in the Text is *εὐσέβεια*, which properly denoteth the spiritual worship of God prescribed in his word.

εὐσέβεια
ἀνὰ πᾶσαν
ἀνταπό-
κρίσιν καὶ
ἐκείνης.

It is called Godliness;

1. Because it is of God.
2. Because it is according to the word and mind of God.
3. Because it tendeth to the glory of God: I shall anon shew what Godli-

The Profit of Godliness.

ness is in several particulars.

Quest. 4.

What is meant by profitable?

Resp. 1.

Profitable is taken first for that which is good, *Luk. 5. 39.*

2. For that which is helpful to obtain any good we would have.

3. For that which is not only a means to further us, but the immediate and proper effect is profit.

4. For that which is of necessity needful, and without which we cannot well be. In all these respects Godliness is profitable unto all things.

1. There is nothing so good and wholesome as Godliness.

2. There is no means so useful and helpful to obtain the best of goods, as Godliness.

3. The immediate and proper effect of Godliness, is our profit and eternal good.

4. There is nothing more needful than Godliness. It is better for a man not to be, than to be without Godliness: it is better for a man never to be born, than to be born, and not to be godly: Men can do better without meat, drink, apparel, riches, houses, lands, than without Godliness: he that ends his daies in ungodliness,

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is an eternally undone man; if he gets the whole world, and not Godliness, he reaps no profit.

Godliness is profitable to all things, that is, to all intents and purposes; it is profitable for every thing whatsoever.

CHAP. III.

Hence in the first place we may observe;

That Godliness is very beneficial *Obfer. I.* to a man in every thing. He that hath Godliness, hath all things; he wants nothing that is requisite to make a man happy. Be godly, and you have riches, honour enough: it is *principium, medium, Calvin in & finis Christiana vite*, it is the beginning *loc.* of Christianity, it is the middle, it is the end, it is the All of a Christian, saith Calvin upon the place. *Godliness is great gain*, 1 Tim. 6. 6. It is great honours, great riches, it is a great purchase; no man in the world makes such a profitable bargain as godly men; no men in the world drive such a trade as they, *Prov. 3. 13, 14, 15, 16. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom*: It is not, Happy is the man that findeth riches and

and honours, but that findeth Godliness: Happy is the man that getteth understanding; it is not, Happy is the man that getteth wealth and honour, but the true knowledge of God, *vers. 13. The Merchandise of it is better than the Merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold;* that is, Godliness is a richer commodity than gold or silver: Worldlings look upon such as gain gold and silver in great abundance, as the only rich men; but he that gaineth Godliness, gaineth the greatest profit. *Vers. 14. Silver, Gold, Rubies, and all precious stones, yea whatsoever is desirable in the world, is not comparable to Godliness:* all the things a man can desire are not comparable to Godliness: what great, what precious things may not a man desire to have! let him desire what he can, let him desire that all the waters in the Sea were turned into wine and oyl, and it should be his; let him desire that all the stones in the street and fields were turned into Diamonds; let him desire all the Mines of gold and silver in the whole world; yet these vast desires, were they turned into realities, were not comparable to Godliness. *Vers. 15. Length of dayes are on wisdom's right hand, and in her left hand*

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hand riches and honour, *Vers. 16.* Here you see it is profitable for life, for riches, for honours: it is equivalent to these, and infinitely better than all these.

This doctrine is a Paradox to the world; flesh and blood hath not faith to believe it: therefore it is observable, what the Apostle saith in the words following my Text, *This is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation;* whether the world will believe this saying, that Godliness is profitable to all things, or not believe it: yet saith the Apostle, It is a most faithful, true, infallible saying, and deserveth all credit. The day of death and judgment is coming, wherein all the world shall put their seal to this truth, that Godliness is profitable to all things: the gain of the whole world is not comparable to that of Godliness; at death and judgment one mite of grace will be worth all the world.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

SECT. I.

IN prosecution of the point I must shew,

1. What is Godliness.
2. That it is beneficial and profitable to all things.
3. The reasons why it is so.

1. What is Godliness.

It is of absolute concernment to know what is true Godliness, to which Heaven and Earth is promised, that so our hopes of eternal life may not make us ashamed at the last: there are many who lay claim to the promises of Heaven, that have no more right to them or Heaven, than the foolish Virgins, presuming that they were godly, and claimed to Heaven, but were with shame thrust down from Heaven-gates into Hell among the ungodly.

There is a fourfold Godliness, three sorts are supposed and esteemed by men to be Godliness, but are not; there is but one true real substantial Godliness.

1. There is a civil Godliness, which is nothing else but a civil, moral and ingenious deportment of a man's self among and before

fore men, consisting of the negative part of Godliness; as to be no drunkard, no swearer, no adulterer, no unjust person; such was the Godliness of the Pharisees: God, I thank thee, I am not as yonder Publican is; this among the geaerality of men is reputed very Godliness; but alas! it cometh as short of the glory of true Godliness, as the light of a Candle cometh of the glory of the Sun: if this were Godliness, then there may be as true Godliness among Pagans and Infidels, who know nothing of God and Christ, as among Christians: Yea, many Heathens have been very eminent for civil righteousness, and a moral conversation, even to the shame of many Christians. Do but think what manner of persons the foolish Virgins were; you may conclude that civil righteousness is not Godliness; for they were such, yet they had neither promise nor possession of the life to come, which they should have had, if civil and moral righteousness be true Godliness; yet though this be not Godliness, yet civility shall so far profit them, as that their torment in Hell shall be less than the torment of others.

2. There is an humane, voluntary, devised Godliness, which in my Text is called
bodily

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Bodily exercise ; and is nothing else but a rigid discipline of the body, with much fasting and abstinence from some meats for certain dayes and weeks together, eating of Herbs, lying on the ground, separating themselves from worldly business, and civil society of men, living in Wilderneses, Cells, Monasteries, and austerity of life, which God commandeth not, and therefore approveth not of. Yet this strictness of life, this neglecting of the body (as the Apostle termeth it) is highly magnified by Papists, as if it were a divine and Angelical Godliness: but this is not Godliness ; for *St. Paul* doth here oppose Godliness to this bodily exercise ; and it is obvious to any observing eye, that none are greater enemies to the power of Godliness then such devout persons. Such was the Godliness of the Pharisees, who placed worship and religion in washing hands before meat, in washing pots and cups, in fasting twice a week, in wearing heavy mortars on their heads, and tying thorns to their heels. Men may please themselves with these or the like devised devotions, but God abhors them ; all that can be said for such wayes is that of the Apostle, *Colos. 2. 23, they have a shew of wisdom,*

of

of humility, of devotion, of Godliness, as bright brass hath a shew of gold, but it is not; and as painted flowers have a shew of flowers, but are not.

3. There is an Hypocritical Godliness, which is (as St. Paul saith, 2. Tim. 3. 5.) the form of Godliness; the whole external shape of it; it hath all the outward parts of it, it wanteth nothing but the power of it. As a dead man hath all the outward parts of a man, there is not a member wanting, but only he hath no life, no soul in him; so an Hypocrite hath all the visible parts of Godliness, in respect of duty, and in respect of grace, he prayeth, he heareth the word, he fasteth, he receiveth the Sacraments, he liveth unblameably before men; he hath all grace in appearance; seeming faith, love, temperance, sobriety, zeal, obedience; but there is no power nor life in him; this (like bodily exercise) profits him a little, it gaineth the name and credit of religion to him, he is commended and applauded, he hath the praise of men; this is all the profit Hypocrisie bringeth; but the hypocrite hath no promises made to him, but the dreadful threatenings of woe, death, and damnation to come.

4. There

4. There is a true substantial Godliness, which God commandeth, approveth, and delighteth in, to which he hath made all promises of heaven and earth. What this Godliness is, I must now shew, and where in it doth consist.

SECT. 2.

TRUE Godliness consisteth in these particulars.

1. In a principle of grace within: he that is truly godly, is a *partaker of the Divine nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4. *born of God*, 1 Joh. 3. 9. *the seed of God is in him*: *sanctified in soul and in spirit*, 1 Thes. 5. 23. Godliness is from God, it is a Divine property, it is the image of God, it cometh from Heaven, and makes us like unto God; if thy heart be not sanctified, if the divine nature and the seed of God be not in thee, there is no Godliness in thee; all thy works of righteousness, and all thy religious duties are not Godliness; they are but shews and semblances of Godliness: The spirit of Grace must be in thee as a root, before thou canst bring forth the fruits of the spirit; thy person must be made Godly, before thy life or thy profession can

he Godliness ; *Oportet aliquid intus esse ;*
there must be Godliness within, before
there can be Godliness without : Thistles
cannot bring forth grapes ; oh therefore
look and pray, that thy heart may be
changed, renewed, that the seed of God
be in it.

2. True Godliness is a giving to God
his whole worship according to his word ;
he that is Godly, doth not only give God
the outward acts of worship, but giveth
him internal worship ; he serveth God
with his body and with his spirit ; he draws
nigh with his mouth and with his heart ;
He doth not only pray, hear, read the
word, meditate, and receive Sacraments,
which are the external acts of worship ;
but he doth also love God above all things,
and fear God above all, and delight
in God above above all things, and
trust in God, and depend and live on
God ; The word which the Apostle useth
in my Text is *in opera*, which signifies gi-
ving to God spiritual worship according to
his word ; these are the worshippers which
God seeks for and delighteth in : outward
worship without inward, is ungodliness ; is
hypocrisie, it is mocking God ; it is a com-
passing God about with lyes ; this is that
which

*Pietas est
Dei Reve-
rentia cum
amore con-
juncta,
quam bene-
ficiorum
ejus notitia
conciliat.
Calvin In-
stit. lib. 1.
cap. 2.
Pietas est
sancta Dei
veneratio
& obtem-
peratio legi-
bus illius.
Noel in
Catech.*

which distinguisheth the godly from the ungodly and hypocrites; for wicked men and hypocrites worship God externally and give him all external worship, but deny him the internal worship; they pray and hear the word (things good in themselves) but do not love nor fear God, nor delight in him, nor in his presence; it is the Godly man that doth All.

3. True Godliness appeareth in the judgement, will and affections of men.

1. In the judgement: a man truly Godly esteemeth the ways of God as the most excellent ways. No sword like *Goliaths*: no way like to the ways of the Lord: and that not in general (for hypocrites illighted may do) but in particular as to himself, he approveth of Gods ways as the best ways for him to walk in and therefore makes choice of them for the wayes wherein he will walk: The profane man chooseth the evil wayes of sin, the civil man chooseth the way of outward morality; but the godly man chuseth the holy strict ways of God to walk in. *I have chosen the way of truth*, Psal 119. 30. *I have chosen thy precepts*, ver. 173.

2. In the bent and resolution of the will. *As for me and my house we will serve*

The Lord, said *Joshua* : let others make what resolution they please, this is the peremptory resolution of a Godly man.

3. In his affections ; his sorrow is Godly. Godly sorrow worketh repentance : there is a sorrow that is not Godly, as the sorrow of *Ahab*, of *Judas* : the holy mans fear is Godly ; he serveth God with reverence and Godly fear, *Heb.* 12. 28. there is a fear that is not Godly ; *Sinners in Sion are afraid*. His love is also Godly, and his delight is Godly : Godliness is upon all his affections : it is called *Godly fear and sorrow*, &c. because it is from God, and according to God, and for God ; it is ultimately terminated in God.

4. True Godliness appeareth in the conversation : the general course of a Godly mans life is according to the word of God : what sins he seeth are forbidden, he refuseth : what duties are commanded, he is willing to do, *2 Tim.* 3. 12. *All that will live Godly in Christ Jesus* : you see here, there is a Godly life : it is said in *Christ Jesus*, noting that Godliness consisteth in conjunction to Christ, communion with him, and imitation of him, *2 Pet.* 3. 11. *What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and Godliness?*

The Profit of Godliness.

A Godly conversation notes two things

1. *Universality* : a Godly man abstaineth from every gross sin ; he is for every duty, *I have respect unto all thy commandments*, saith David, *Psal. 119. 6.* he respecteth all as well as one : an habitua neglect of one known duty marrerth all the pretended Godliness. St. Luke describing the Godliness of Zacharias and Elizabeth saith, *that they walked in all the commandments and ordinances of God blameless*. Luk. 1. 6. Observe, they had respect to commandments and to all ordinance. To walk in one ordinance, and not in the other, is not Godliness ; to walk in some commandments precisely, and not in others is ungodly hypocrisie : *fides est copulativa obedientia est copulativa* : faith and obedience are copulative.

2. It appeareth in the constancy of our conversation ; hence it is compared to walk, because it is a constant progress ; is a race, because it must be run to the end : it is not a few good acts, when conscience stirreth, or as other occasions urge us : it is not for a day, nor for a long space, but it is for continuance : it is a course that lasteth as long as life lasteth : it is not like a candle which is lighted

and then blown out, put in and put out again, but Godliness is like the Sun and Stars that constantly shine : and how ever things and times go, and in what place and company soever, Godliness will appear ; a true Godly man in all changes is Godly, in prosperity, in adversity, in all states and conditions he is Godly ; *Job* in his prosperous estate feared God, and in his poor estate blessed God.

5. True Godliness makes a man ready to do good to all : he that is truly Godly, is after Gods example, pious, kind, gracious and merciful to others ; as he receiveth mercy, grace and kindness from God, so he imparts it to others ; he would have all like himself ; the Hebrew word [Chesed] כֶּסֶד which the LXX. translate Holy, signifieth a kind benign man : *Solomon* describeth a good man by this property, that he is merciful to his beast, much more then to men, most of all to them that be of the household of faith.

6. Godliness makes a man to act all for Gods glory : he doth all in sincerity, aiming at no other end, than that God may be glorified by him ; nothings stirs him up more to glorifie God than Godliness ; were there no Heaven to crown him,

no Hell to affright him, yet he would serve God, because God is glorified by his service; *finis denominat opus*; things take their names from the end for which they are, and act; when men make gain their end, we call them worldly men; when they make honours their end, we call them ambitious; so when they make God their end, they are rightly called godly men, as rivers come from the Sea, and run into the Sea; so Godliness cometh from God and terminateth in God.

Serm. 2. Preached *Novemb. 10. 1661.*

CHAP. V.

SECT. I.

I Have shewn in what true Godliness doth consist: I shall now shew that it is profitable unto all things: as they say of the Philosophers stone, that it will turn all metals into gold; so Godliness will turn all things into profit and advantage to us, that in the end men shall cry out, It is good for me that I was godly. Before I come to shew

shew how it is beneficial to particular things: I shall shew,

1. That Godliness is in it self transcendently good and beneficial, *1 Tim. 6. 6.* *Godliness is great gain*: if you want all things, not Godliness, you have yet riches enough; it is great gain, it is the best good, it is the chiefest of blessings; the word is emphatically significant; it is not *μὲν*, it is not the rent or great tribute, but *μείζων*, a constant and continued gain, a fountain of profit: it is equivalently all things, it answers all things, it makes a man rich and happy without the addition of other things: but all other things cannot make a man happy without Godliness: A rich man is not happy because of his riches, nor an honourable man because of his honours, but happy is the man that hath the Lord for his God: wretched rich glutton, because wicked; but happy poor *Lazarus*, because godly; he was exceeding rich, he had a good God, a good Christ, a good Covenant, good Pardon, good Grace, and a good Conscience: Oh what gain had *Lazarus*! As the Philosopher said of virtue, that if men could but see it, all would desire virtue; if men could but see what gain Godliness is, every man

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would

would desire it : Oh that I were godly and say as *Themistocles* did to his servants seeing Jewels and Bracelets lying before him, *Tolle tu ista, ego Themistocles sum, Take thou up these things, I am Themistocles* ; Let others take up gold and silver, and worldly gain ; oh that I were godly ! I must be godly.

Now Godliness is not only beneficial in it self (which I shall not insist upon) but proceed to shew how profitable it is to other things, that if we would be blessed in every thing, let us add Godliness to every thing, which, like a Diamond, make that in which it is set to be rich ; set a Diamond in a ring of straw, or of wood, or of lead, it is a rich ring ; take away the Diamond, it is but straw and wood, and of little or no value : so, do but add Godliness to your money, to your riches, to your possessions, every thing is the richer ; take away Godliness, and they are dung and dross.

SECT. 2.

Let us now come to consider particulars.

1. *It is profitable to our outward estate in many respects.*

1. It will teach us to get riches juſtly ; a penny thus gotten, is better than a pound gotten by iniquity ; *Luther* ſaid of unjuſt profit, it is *lucrum in arca, damnum in conſcientia* : it is gain in the purſe, but it is loſs in the conſcience ; at laſt it will ſting like a Serpent, and bite like an Adder : that which makes a man to ſmile now, will make him to ſigh hereafter ; that which makes him proud now, will confound him with ſhame at the laſt : riches, be they more or leſs gotten in Gods way, will be found ſweet gain.

2. Godlineſs is it that brings a bleſſing upon our labours for worldly gain. *Pſal.* 128. *Bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, and walketh in his wayes ; for thou ſhalt eat the labour of thy hands ; happy ſhalt thou be, and it ſhall be well with thee, ver. 1, 2.* The fear of God will bring a bleſſing upon the labour of your hands ; thou ſhalt not only by thy labour provide food and rayment, but it ſhall be well with thee ; thou ſhalt treaſure up gain ; it is ungodlineſs that cloatheth men with raggs.

3. It will put us upon ſeeking outward gain in due order ; firſt the Kingdom of God, then theſe things ; firſt Heaven, then Earth ; firſt Chriſt and Grace, then money
and

and riches; first a sure title to Heaven, then possessions on Earth, *Matth. 6. 33.* It is because men are ungodly, therefore they seek for earthly things before heavenly: it is ungodliness that makes men seek to defer seeking pardon, Grace and Heaven to the last; it is ungodliness that makes men take immoderate pains for earth, and makes them so slack and negligent in soul-saving commodities; were men godly, they would see a necessity of Grace, of Heaven, of Salvation; it is absolutely necessary to be saved; it is not necessary that I am rich, but I must be saved.

4. Godliness will enable thee to improve thy riches to the glory of God, and the furtherance of thine own salvation: it is Godliness that will make thee honour the Lord with thy substance, and to feed Christ in his members. 'Tis Godliness that will make us wise and faithful servants in improving our talents for our Masters use; this will bring comfort to our souls, and admittance into the Masters joy: it is ungodliness that makes men to lay out their gain on their pride, vanity, lusts; it is ungodliness that makes men the more wicked, by how much the more rich they are: we must all give an account of the use of our estate;

estate; wicked men shall not give an account of their having, but of their not rightly improving, or their abusing of their riches: the slothful servant was cast into outer darkness, not for having a talent, but for not improving it: and there is not a penny which they lay out upon their lusts, but God will bring them to an account for it.

5. Godlineſs is that which makes outward possessions to be blessings to us; they are blessings in themselves, but they are not to us, but as we are; if we are wicked, then they are curses, and not blessings.

Mal. 2. 2. I will curse your blessings, yea I have cursed them already: Wine is wholesome in it self, but being put into poisoned vessels, it is poison to him that drinketh it. All wicked men may cry out of their worldly goods, as the young Prophet to *Elisha*; *My Father, there is death in the pot*; there is a curse in my basket; there is a curse in my store, a curse in my baggs, in my houses, in my lands; all that I have, I receive from an angry God. Now Godlineſs is like the Meal which the Prophet cast into the pot, which caused no harm to be in the pot, but they might eat of it: So Godlineſs makes makes all our enjoyments good, that we may comfortably enjoy and use them.

SECT

SECT. 3.

2. *Godliness is profitable to poverty.*

1. **G**odliness (if thy estate be little and mean) makes it great: *A little that the righteous man hath, is greater than the great revenues of the wicked: A little with Godliness, is better than the gain of the whole world without it: the least number in Arithmetick stands for more than a thousand cyphers; all created comforts without Godliness, are but empty and insignificant cyphers. The righteous (saith the wise man) is more excellent than his neighbour: A godly man in a mean condition, is more rich, honourable, excellent than his neighbour that aboundeth in all worldly things.*

2. Godliness brings contentment; if we cannot bring our estates to our minds, Godliness will bring our minds to our estates, and make us quietly sit down with what portion soever the Lord shall give us; What saith a godly man? My poverty is not a thing of chance, but of Gods providence; it is the will of God I should be poor; my Saviour Christ was poor: What if I am not rich in this worlds goods?

yet

yet I am rich in faith: What if I have not precious substance? yet I have precious faith, precious promises, precious pardon, precious holiness: I can be contented to be without the fatness of the earth, as long as I have the dew of Heaven: it was Godliness that taught *Paul* the mystery of contentation in every estate, to know how to abound, and how to want, *Phil. 4. 12.*

Contentation with our mean estate is great riches: The philosopher could say, *Two things make a man rich, the possession of substance, and contentation in the thing we do possess.* *Possessio rei, & contentatio in re possessa.*

3. Godliness sweetens poverty to a godly man; it turns his cup of cold water into wine, it turns his raggs into robes, his crust of course bread into delicates, and makes a dinner of green Herbs better than a stalled Oxe: *To him that is hungry every bitter thing is sweet, saith Solomon:* So it is to him that is godly; the more Godliness, the more contentment, and the more sweetness they shall find in poverty.

4. It is Godliness that turns want and poverty, hunger and nakedness into a blessing: it is a blessing that they want outward blessings; it is riches to want riches, and abundance to want all things: *Lazarus* his

his poverty was his blessing; the glutton
riches was his curse: How doth the one
glory acknowledge, It was good for me
that I was poor! How doth the other
torments cry out, It was my happiness
that I was rich! God can give riches to the
godly, and make them the richest men in
the places where they live, but God knoweth
that poverty is better for some than riches.

SECT. 4.

3. *Godliness is profitable to all our changes
in this world.*

WE see how Gods providence turns and
tosseth the worldly states of men; to-
day he placeth them in the Mount of pro-
perity, shortly he puts them in the valley of
adversity: to day *Job* is in a Palace, to mor-
row on a dunghill: to day *Belisarius* is in
triumphant pomp, to morrow he is beg-
ging, *Dare obolum Belisario*, give an half
penny to poor *Belisarius*. Now what
changes soever Providence effecteth, God-
liness is profitable: It made *Job* to bless
God when he gave, and to bless God when
he took away; to fear God in prosperity,
to fear him in adversity; Godliness will
make men to carry their cups even in every
estate

estate and change; like Bells that ring the same tune at Funerals, as at Marriages: the philosopher said, that an honest man is *homo quadratus*, a four-squar'd man: A godly man is thus, he will stand upright in every turn and change of condition.

4. *Godliness is profitable to afflictions.*

1. It is Godliness that turns and changeth the nature of afflictions (which are evil and penal in themselves) to be medicinal and good to us; it turns these waters into wine, and these stones into bread: Like *Moses's Rod*, it makes a passage of the Red Sea into *Canaan*, that they shall speak out of experience, *It was good for me that I was afflicted*; this loss was good for me, this cross was good for me, this trouble; this persecution was good for me; all the sufferings of this life do work the good of godly men, *Rom. 8. 28. All things shall work together for good*: they are other mens punishments, other mens destruction; that which is a red Sea to godly men, is a Serpent to wicked men, *eo nomine*, because they are ungodly: All afflictions are the indignation and wrath of God on them that do evil.

2. 'Tis

The Profit of Godliness.

2. 'Tis Godliness that makes us submissive to, and patient under the hand of God: *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his sight*, said old *Eli*. *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because it was thy doing*, saith *David*. *We will bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned*, said the Church: the more godly the more patience and submissiveness: the yoke seems more easie, and the burden more light to them.

3. It is Godliness that makes us joyfull in sufferings, and brings true and solid comfort; sometimes superlative and unspeakable joy; that as *St. Paul* speaks of his rap-
ture, he did not know whether he was in the body, or out of the body; such is the joy of godly men sometimes in the midst of afflictions, that they feel not whether they be in afflictions, or out of afflictions.

5. *Godliness is profitable to all relations.*

It doth not only make us good men, but good Magistrates, good Ministers, good Husbands, good Wives, good Fathers, good Children, good Masters, good Servants: *Jacob* was a good Son, a good Servant, a good Master: it is Godliness that

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makes us careful and conscionable of the duties of our several relations; and the Godliness of men is as much tryed in relation-duties, as in any other duties.

6. *Godliness is profitable to all our religious duties.*

They are not pleasing nor acceptable unto God, unless the person be godly; all the duties of wicked men are an abomination to the Lord; this is the Altar that sanctifies this gold: it is Godliness that fits us for duty, and it is that which makes us to delight in holy duties; this is that which makes the Spirit willing, when the flesh is weak: daies and duties of religion are tedious burdens to ungodly men.

SECT. 5.

7. Godliness is profitable to our bodies, to our souls.

GODliness is very beneficial and profitable to our bodies.

1. Bodily exercises may keep down the body, but Godliness purifies the body from the filthiness of the flesh : Bodily exercises may restrain, but Godliness mortifies the

deeds of the body. *Rom. 8. 13.* Bodily exercises (such as abstinence from meats, and lying on the ground) may starve the body and weaken it; but Godliness destroys the body of sin in the body.

Godliness makes every member an instrument of righteousness and true holiness; it makes the tongue an instrument of Gods glory, which ungodliness makes an instrument of blasphemy; it makes the tongue a fountain of good discourse tending to edification; ungodliness makes it a fountain of cursed speaking: Godliness will make the heart liberal, the hand bountiful, the eye to delight in seeing Gods works, the ear to hear the words of God, the feet swift to go and come in the Lords Courts, and to delight to stand there ministering to the Lord. All the members of ungodly men are instruments of wickedness, and enmity to holiness: their tongues are worlds of iniquity, their eyes worlds of vanity, their hands worlds of wicked deeds.

3. It is Godliness which doth not only preserve the body from gross sins (for morality and hypocrisie may do) but makes us to hate all gross defilements; moral men are restrained from them, but yet abhor the

them not ; it is Godliness that makes them abhor all bodily pollutions, to watch against them, that they be not overcome with such vices.

8. Godliness is profitable to our souls.

1. It is the best good and perfection of the soul, it is the Image of God, making the soul like to God : God is said to be *glorious in holiness* ; a godly soul is a glorious soul : There is no perfection of the soul makes the soul so like God as Godliness doth : 'Tis not the spirituality of the soul ; for the souls of wicked men and reprobates in Hell are spiritual substances ; neither is it the immortality of the soul ; for so all souls are, and Devils are immortal spirits ; it is only the purity, the holiness of the soul that makes the soul like to God.

2. It is Godliness that makes and keeps the soul more pure, more holy : the more grace increaseth, the more sin decreaseth ; this light expels the darkness ; 'Tis this that keeps the conscience void of offence both toward God and man.

3. Godliness is profitable to the soul against temptations to sin ; the Devil throws his fiery darts at the godly to set them on

fire of Hell, but it is Godliness that quencheth them: It was Godliness that made Joseph say, *How can I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God?* How dare I to be drunk, and sin against God? How dare I to swear, and sin against God? How dare I to prophane Sabbaths, and sin against God? Godliness will teach a man thus to say, *The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil.* It is through ungodliness that temptations hurry wicked men into swinish sin: ungodly men can no more withstand a temptation, than a feather can withstand the wind.

4. It is Godliness that brings the peace of God, and joy of the Holy Ghost into the soul; God will not pour this heavenly wine into old bottles; the purged conscience is the pacified conscience.

5. Godliness puts the soul into a fitness for glory and blessedness in Heaven; no unclean thing can enter into Heaven: He must be godly that lives with God: the want of this Oyl was the cause of the Virgin's dejection from Heaven to Hell: In Heaven there are none but *the spirits of just men made perfect* in holiness and righteousness: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

6. Godliness

6. Godliness is profitable to the soul in death.

1. It is Godliness that makes the soul not to fear the King of terrors, not to fear the grim looks of death.

2. It is Godliness that makes the soul to desire death; *I desire to be dissolved*, saith godly *Paul*.

3. It is Godliness that makes men to dye full of solid comfort, and solid hope; it assureth a man of a better life after death.

4. It is Godliness that makes death a gain to them, that makes death to be a short passage into Heaven: Oh what fills the souls of many with horror and terror, but the sad reflection of their consciences on their by-past-life, which they have mis-spent in all ungodliness! Every man will see that Godliness is the only profitable thing at death: When thy soul is in a certain expectation of death and judgment, and in perplexing doubts of thy future condition, what will become of thy soul after death? what wilt thou desire then? what will most please thee then? Thou wilt then cry out, Oh that I had grace! oh that I were godly! oh that I had spent my time in Godliness! one mite of true Godliness then, will be more worth than all the world.

7. Godliness is profitable for the day of judgment : this is it that will make men stand with boldness before the dreadful tribunal of Christ : all proceedings at that day will be according to our Godliness and ungodliness : we shall all be judged according to the quality of our persons & works ; ye fed me, and ye fed me not ; ye visited me, and yet visited me not, will the charge be on that day, *Psal. 1. The ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the Congregation of the righteous* : they shall not stand, but were it possible to hide themselves, they would ; but that they cannot be able to do ; therefore they shall fall into perdition, when as the righteous shall be enabled to stand.

8. Godliness is and will be profitable to the godly to eternity : it is now profitable to entitle us to it, to assure us of it, and to fit us for it, and hereafter it will be profitable to the eternal fruition of it ; life eternal is nothing else but Godliness in glory, happiness to perfection, and it is Godliness that will enable us to do the will of God perfectly and eternally.

Thus you see what compleat provision Godliness makes for a man : the wicked man and the hypocrite at best is provided

but for one half of himself; the greatest man is but provided for his body, his body is cloathed, his belly fed; but what is the poor soul that is naked and starved? Again, he is provided but for half his time: I have spoken a great word, in saying half his time: Alas! it is but for a day, yea less, for an hour, for a minute in comparison of eternity; he is only provided for in this life, he hath all his goods in this life; at death he parts with all; when a mans Lease is expired, he surrenders up all again to the Lord: Now a godly man is provided for his whole self, and for ever: for his body, for his soul, for this life, and for that which is to come; they have grace on Earth, and glory in Heaven; the best of mercies, and the best of Heaven is provided for them.

One Reason of the Point.

The reason of this Point is, because God himself takes the whole care of godly men on himself. *Psal. 4. 4. Know ye that the Lord hath set apart the man that is godly for himself:* The Hebrew word signifies both to deal wonderfully, and to separate; therefore some render it, The Lord hath wonderfully separated him that is godly for himself: God hath set him apart to provide for him, to guide, to protect, to bless him,

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to do him all manner of good, to sanctify and save him; then he cannot but profit in every thing, and be blessed in every purpose: God having separated him to salvation, will order that all things shall promote his salvation. I shall forbear any further reasons, seeing the Apostle hath given the main reason, because Godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come; therefore Godliness is profitable unto all things. I should now have made some application, but shall forbear till I have handled the next doctrine.

Serm. 3. Preached *Novemb.* 17. 1661.

CHAP. VI.

YOU have heard how Godliness is profitable to all intents and purposes, how it turns all into gold; it makes good things better, and evil things good to us, and so on. Now I shall shew you, whence it is that Godliness hath this virtue and efficacy to work such wondrous things; the words that I am now to handle, tell us, it is because

Godliness

Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

To Godliness all divine promises are made; Consider what pertains to this life; promises of all such things are made to it: what pertaineth to eternal life; the promises of such things are made to Godliness. It hath the promises of food, of rayment, of health, of long life, of riches, of honours: it hath the promises of grace, of pardon, of the merits and Spirit of Christ, which purchase and fit us for the life to come; and it hath the promise of glory and immortality, and eternal life in the world to come; so that God hath provided for Godliness in this world, and in the world to come.

Daneus on my Text gives this reason why God promises the things of this life, *ut omnem* ^{Daneus in loc.}

nem excusationem Deus adimat, that he might take away all excuse from men: for, had God only promised life eternal, and the Kingdome of Heaven to Godliness, and had not promised a supply of necessities in our earthly passage to Heaven, men would have complained, and said, The promises of Heaven, and of life eternal, are most transcendently great rewards; but what shall we have in this life? what shall we have in this waste howling wilderness of the world,

world, till we come to this heavenly Canaan? Now to stop the mouths of such murmurers, to take away all excuse from us, and to quicken us to the pursuit of Godliness, he promiseth to godly men, that he will provide for them in this life, as he gave to *Israel* Manna from Heaven, Water out of a Rock, and gave them Quails in the wilderness, as they were travelling to Canaan.

CHAP. VII.

THe Point that I shall lay down next to be handled, is,

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That Heaven and Earth, the things of this life, and of the life to come, are entailed upon Godliness by sure promise. A cloud of witnesses may be brought to prove the truth of this Point.

1. That the things of this life are promised, consider, *Psal. 34 9 There is no want to them that fear him, vers. 10. They that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing; and vers. 13. What man desireth life, and many days, that he may see good? As who should say; If there be any man that desireth to live long, and to enjoy prosperity,*

let him keep his tongue from evil, and let him be godly. The 37. Psalm is full of promises of the life that now is, made to Godly men : you may find promises made to all, to the father, to the child, to the sick man, to the healthy man ; there is the living mans promise, the dying mans promise : and 5. times this promise is made to Godliness : the Godly, *the meek shall inherit the earth*, verses. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34. they shall have earthly things for an inheritance, sure, settled to them and theirs after them ; *seek ye first the kingdom of God, &c. and all these things shall be added unto you*, Math. 6. 33. make Godliness and salvation thy business, and Christ promiseth to all such, all other things, as food, raiment, and whatsoever is necessary for the life that now is : let men take care of getting heaven, then God will be careful to provide earthly things. 'Tis said all these things shall be added to you, all things whatsoever your Father knows you need.

2. That the things of the life to come are promised to Godliness, as justification, sanctification, adoption, and salvation ; you are strangers in the Scriptures, if you perceive not promises of these things,

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*He that believeth shall be saved, Mat. 16. 16. there is the promise of Salvation. Fear not little flock, it is your Fathers will to give you a Kingdom, Luk. 12. 32. there is the promise of Heaven to the Godly. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life, Rom. 2. 7. I should tyre your patience, if I should bring particular promises for subduing your lusts, for conquering your tentations, for healing your backslidings, for comfort, for perseverance in grace, for supply of your wants for deliverance from dangers, for success in your callings : heaven and earth are full of mercies : there are particular promises of every mercy made to Godliness, as any who studies the word of God may easily observe. I shall give you but one promise more, because in it is contained the promise of the things of this life, and of the which is to come : Psal. 84. 11. *The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly* : here is the promise of spiritual things in the word [grace] here is the promise of eternal things in the word [glory :] here is the promise of the things of this life in these words, [*And no good thing*]*

nothing will be withhold from them what walk
uprightly:] what is good for us to have,
he will not withhold: so that what Godly
men have, it is good for them: and the
things they want are withheld from them,
because hurtful to them.

CHAP. VIII.

The Reasons of the point.

I Shall now give you the reasons why all
promises belong to the godly.

Reas. 1. Because they belong to Christ;
wherefore all promises belong to the God-
ly: *all things are yours*, saith the Apostle,
because ye are Christs, and Christ is Gods:
for all promises are made to Christ, and in
him to us: they were made to him as the
common Head and root of the elect; to him
as the Head, therefore to his members; the
promises as *Aarons* ointment run down
from him to all his members: 2 Cor. 1. 20.
for *all the promises of God are in him yea,*
and in him amen, because in the New cove-
nant God neither makes nor fulfills any
promise but in Christ, through Christ, and
for Christ. The promises are in him yea
for

for truth: they are in him Amen for performance; no Christ, no promises; without Christ, without all promises; interest in promises is grounded on our union with Christ, and communion with Christ. Christless men must not expect the performance of any promise.

2. Because godly persons are in covenant with God; all the promises are the particular branches of the covenant; they are the rivulets and streams flowing out of the covenant: it is the Grand Charter comprehending within it all the particular Grants: in it as in humane sales, to whom the lease is made, all the particulars contained therein are made to him also: it is between God and man; that man with whom God makes an everlasting covenant to him all the particular grants in that covenant are made. The grand promise of the covenant is, *I will be thy God*, which is like the sea holds all in it, and like a rich treasury containeth all things. *I will be thy God*, that is, I will be thy pardoning God, reconciled God, sanctifying God, and saving God; I will be thy God to provide all necessities: It is a notable observation on which a good Divine made of the name of God, when *Moses* asked of God, If the people

people ask me what is thy name, what shall I say unto them? God bade him tell them, I Am hath sent me to you. I am all things which you need, which you desire. I am houses, lands, honours, I am grace, glory, every good thing.

3. Because Godliness is the condition of the covenant, therefore all promises belong to it: for what is Godliness but faith, repentance, new obedience, the fear of God, holiness of life, which are the terms and conditions of all the promises in the whole Scripture? and all Godly men do in some measure come up to the conditions of the promises, and can claim the promises for their inheritance.

CHAP. IX.

I Shall now shew you what a promise is, and how many sorts of promises there are.

1. *What a promise is.*

A promise is the word of God given unto men, whereby he binds himself, and assureth them, that he will freely bestow good things upon them, and remove evil things from them: it is convenient to consider

*Definit. of
a Promise.*

sider this description in some particulars.

1. I say, it is the word of God given to man; for as the civil promise of a man is his word given to another for the performance of some lawful thing; so a Divine promise is the word of God given for the performance of good things; it differs from a covenant or contract, because in them there is a mutual restipulation between both parties: as in the covenant of grace, God promiseth to be our God, and we again promise to be his people: but now a promise is Gods own act, requiring no restipulation from us, but only our faith in his promise; but yet whether we believe or not believe his word given to us, yet God having given his word, it is a promise made to us, but shall not be made good to us till we believe. Promises are nothing else but the outward manifestation of Gods inward purposes towards us: promises are Gods good purposes revealed to us: his word declareth what his purposes are towards us, what his thoughts, his will and mind are towards us; therefore the Greeks call a promise *ἐπαγγελία*, as in many texts, because it is an emanation of the good will of God unto his people.

2. Wherein

2. *Whereby he binds himself.*] A mans word once given, binds him ; promise is due debt, we use to say : so God having out of his free pleasure plighted his word, hath engaged his truth, fidelity, and power to perform : hence it is said, it is just with God to forgive us our sins, because it is an act of justice to make good his word : herein we see the height and breadth and depth of his love to us, that seeing God might have required duty of us without promising any reward, yet he is graciously pleased to lay an obligation on himself to reward us : in this promises differ from precepts, because promises lay an obligation on God, and precepts lay an obligation on men : promises declare what God will do for us, and precepts declare what God will have us to do ; promises are manifestations of his love to us, precepts of his authority over us. N. B.

3. *To assure us.*] We take the promise of a man for security to assure us of his performance : it is the end why men pass their word to one another, to assure one another of their performances. So God hath given his word to assure us that he will give us all good things ; no greater security then the word of a God who cannot lye, who

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will

will not deceive, who can and will effect what his mouth hath spoken; this sure word given to us is the ground of our faith, hope, expectation, confidence. A godly man may boldly say, I shall have the things of this life, God hath given his word that I shall have them: I shall have heaven for mine inheritance, I have the word of God for it; I shall want no good thing, I have Gods word for this; I am as confident of having them, as if I had them already in hand; the word of God given to us is as certain as actual performance.

4. That he will freely bestow all good things upon us, and remove evil things from us: here we have the matter of the promises.

1. That he will bestow all good things; as threatnings are of evil things, so promises are of good things: God will bestow the good things of this life on us, food and raiment, and whatsoever is good for us; the good things of spiritual and eternal life; there is not one thing which he knows to be good for us, but he will bestow in his appointed season: when his hour is come, he will turn all our water into wine, and stones into bread, *Hib. 4.* we shall obtain grace and mercy to help in

time

time of need; but the words are *his iuxta op-
portunitatem, in opportunum auxilium*, fit help,
opportune help, when mercy is a further-
ance to our salvation.

2. But God hath promised also the re-
moval of all evil from us: privative, as
well as positive mercies are the matter of
divine promises: it is a question which of
them are the greater; I will not now exa-
mine. To be kept from evil, to be deliver-
ed out of evil, to be redeemed from all
wrath to come, to be saved from everlast-
ing damnation, to have all tears wiped
from our eyes, that destruction shall not
come nigh us, are desirable mercies which
God hath promised, *Rev. 21. 4.* God shall
wipe away all tears from our eyes, and
there shall be no more death, neither sor-
row, nor crying, neither shall there be
any more pain: to be in a perfect state of
happiness as also freed from all fears of fu-
ture misery, is the promise of the life to
come.

5. It is said *freely bestow.*] For albeit
God hath bound himself by his word to
bestow good things, yet all we receive
from him is freely given: his word of
promise is freely given to us: the mercies
promised are free gifts: there is nothing

in us to move God to make such promises to us: there is no merit in us deserving either promise or mercy; our disobedience forfeited all; restitution of any thing is an act of free grace; all temporal as well as eternal mercies flow from the grace of God; when we receive any mercy, even the least of them, we ought to cry out as they in *Zachary*, at the laying of the corner-stone of the Temple, *grace, grace*: that we have food and rayment, it is grace, grace; that we have health and strength, tis grace, grace.

CHAP. X.

Sheweth how many sorts of Promises there are.

HAVING seen what a promise is, in the next place let us see how many sorts of promises there are: let us therefore observe these several distinctions.

1. There are promises { *Legal,*
 Evangelical.

1. *Legal* promises which God in the Law makes to men upon condition of obedience

dience, as in Deur. 28. *All these blessings shall come upon thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God: blessed shalt thou be in the City, blessed in the field, in thy children, in thy ground, in thy cattle, &c.* St. Paul saith of the fifth Commandment, *This is the first Commandment with promise*, Eph. 6. and we may observe, that in the Old Testament the promises of temporal mercies are more common then in the New, where promises of spiritual mercies are more common: The reason why God made so many temporal promises to them under the Law, was because that service did most consist in the observation of outward things, and carnal Ordinances, as the Apostle calls them. God that he might win them to a cheerful observation of them, did therefore make many temporal promises. Yet remember this rule, that though they are called legal promises, yet they are appendants to the Covenant of grace; in this respect they may be termed Evangelical.

2. Evangelical promises are the word of God given for the giving of Christ and all his benefits, upon condition of believing the Gospel; hence it is called *the word of*

faith, because it is made with condition of *faith*, which is the only instrument of receiving and applying them.

2. There are promises { *Universal.*
 Special.

1. Promises universal, which belong to Jew and Gentile, and to every Believer, as that promise, Gen. 12. *In thee shall all the Nations of the earth be blessed*: the promises of pardon, grace, glory, are universal, belonging to every godly man: so likewise the promises of the necessities of this life are universal, *Heb. 13. 5.*

2. There are special promises, because they belong to the Jews only, or to some particular persons, and not to all the godly: as the promise of the Land of *Canaan*, flowing with milk and honey, did belong only to the *Israelites*: so there were special promises made to *David*, to *Abram*: which belong not to us, in that Christ should be of their loins.

1. Here remember this rule, that it is said, godliness hath all promises made to it, it is to be meant of the universal promises.

2. That even these special promises

to particulars, yet are under the general promises made to all. As the promise made to *David*, that Christ should come out of his loins, belongs to the general promise of giving Christ to be the Redeemer of mankind; so the special promise of giving *Canaan* to *Israel* for an inheritance, belongs to the universal promise of the life that now is.

3. There are promises { *Absolute.*
 Conditional.

1. There are promises absolute without a condition: the promises absolute are, that the seed of the woman should break the Serpents head; all the promises of giving and sending Christ to be a Saviour are absolute: there was no condition required on mans part: all mankind were under the dreadful curse and condemnation: so also are the promises of giving a new heart, a new spirit, of writing his Law in our hearts. I know it is a Controversie, whether these be promises; they run in the nature of promises, they are within the Covenant of Promise: some think they are rather Prophecies then promises: others, that they are a declara-

N. B.

tion of Gods will, what he will work in his people, for the enabling them to perform the conditions of the Covenant. like that answer, that they are promises of grace to the elect whom God takes into Covenant with him : and they are not promises made to godlinefs , because we bring not faith to accept them.

2. There are conditional promises ; for are all the promises of this life and that to come, made with condition : the promise of pardon is made with condition of repentance, the promise of life eternal and salvation, is made with condition of faith. He that believeth hath life : so the promises of this life are made with condition. If ye observe my commands, then blessing shall ye be in the basket, in the store where there is no performance of the condition, there the promise of God stands firm ; yet to him that performs not the condition, no promise is made good : God will not be a Sun, and a shield, give grace and glory, and every good thing to all that do not walk uprightly. God hath tied us to duty, as well as himself to performance ; he that severs duty from the promise, puts a barr to his own happiness ; we look for the performance of the promise

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promises, let us have respect to obey Gods precepts, God will walk in a way of performance, when we walk in wayes of obedience.

4. There are promises { *Temporal,*
 Spiritual,
 Eternal.

There are the things of this life, and of that which is come, saith the Apostle in my Text; the fatness of the earth, the dew of heaven; the blessing of the labour of our hands, and blessings out of *Sion*; the one exceeds the other as high as heaven is above the earth: a mite of spirituals is more then the vast treasures of the earth: promises of heaven without earthly promises are sufficient to make a man perfectly happy, as pearls can make a man rich, when pebbles cannot: and spiritual and eternal promises are they which saith more principally looks at; it doth but glance its eye to the promises of this life.

5. The promises of spiritual things necessary to the *esse*, and the *bene esse* of a godly man.

1. The promises of spiritual mercies necessary

cessary to the being of godliness and salvation, are performed to every godly man; they are all pardoned, sanctified, adopted, regenerated; they all partake of the merit and spirit of Christ.

2. The promises of mercies pertaining to the well being of godly men in this vale of misery pertain to all the godly; they that have an interest in them can urge God with them, and may expect the performance of them.

3. Yet these promises are not made good to all godly men in this life, nor to any at all times; many have the graces of the spirit, who yet go mourning without the joy and peace of the Holy Ghost: he sanctifieth all, but gives not like comforts to all: Comforts do ebb and flow like the Sea.

4. Yet every godly man having grace, and having the promises of joy and peace, hath the foundation of joy, though he doth not rejoyce with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

5. These promises are but begun in this life, consummated in the life to come; that measure of grace and holiness which Saints have in this life, are but earnest of their perfection of holiness in heaven; those
joys

joys which now they feel, are but foretastes of heaven, like the bunches of grapes which the spies brought from *Canaan*, shewing what the joy of the Lord is in heaven: It is said, *Enter thou into thy Masters joy*; we must enter into it, it cannot enter into us.

Serm. 4. Preached *November 24. 1661.*

CHAP. XI.

I Shall now resolve some Questions concerning the promises of the things of this life.

Why doth God promise to his own people the things of this life? Why hath this great King promised to his children poor earthly cottages, seeing they are heirs of the Kingdome? these things contribute nothing to the happiness of the godly. *Quest. 1.*

There are many reasons hereof; some that respect God, some that respect his people. *Resp.*

Reasons respecting God are;

That he may declare that he hath care of our bodies, as of our souls: they are both his. *Reason 1.*

his by right of Creation, and by right of Redemption; therefore he will provide for both; grace and glory for our souls, and food and rayment for our bodies: Hence Christ in *Matth* 6. in sundry verses, forbids us to take carking care for our bodies, because God takes care of them. *Take ye no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and what ye shall put on, for your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of these things.* God is the Father of your bodies, therefore he will take care of them; and he knoweth your need, therefore he will provide for you. A Father stands obliged not only in point of honour, but also by the Law of nature to provide for his children. *Tam Pater noster*, saith *Bernard*; no Father more loving, more careful of his children, than God is of his people.

Reason 2.

Because God will have all know, that he is the fountain of all good things, not only of spiritual good, as the *Marcionites* and *Manichees* of old held: but of all temporal and earthly good things. *James* 1. 17. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights:* All we have are free gifts: it is the bounty of Heaven to you; it is

not your right of Inheritance, nor the labour of your hands that brings in any thing ye have in your stores, on your tables, on your backs, but all descendeth from God above. We are taught to beg of God our daily bread. The Psalmist tells us, That *the eyes of all things look up to God*; thereby acknowledging that in all these things we must as Chickens, sip and look upwards: We give away the glory of God to the Creature, when we attribute any thing to the means, or our endeavours: God delighteth in this honour, in being the sole Author of all our good, and will not brook any Rival. It is a childish thing to thank the Taylor for the new Coat, when it is the Father that gives it: It is hellish Impiety to make the gifts of God (as too many do) instruments of rebellion against God; there are many of great estates that live in open enmity against God, who gives them all they have.

That by the promises of these earthly-Reason 3. things, he may the more draw us to serve him, and to abound more in every good work: God hath respect to the weakness of men, who, like children, are more won upon by shewing and giving them an Apple for the present, than by the promise of a great

great Inheritance for the future: So childish are all men, that we are sooner drawn to duty toward God by his promises of outward things, than by promises of future happiness: *What shall we have if we pray unto him?* is the general question. *What profit is there in serving the Almighty?* we have more serious thoughts for the present life, than for the life to come. Visible mercies are more taking with our carnal hearts, than invisible; temporal more taking than eternal. God is pleased to promise outward things of this life, that he may invite us to follow after Holiness; thus as the Apostle saith of the Law, so we may say of outward things, these are a Schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, to true Godliness: *Externa promissiones subserviunt spiritualibus*; outward promises are subservient to spiritual things.

Reas. 1.

Reasons in respect of man are, Because hereby we are taught that our whole dependance is on God, as the bee dependeth on the Sun, as the stream dependeth on the fountain: Christians are to live by faith in temporal, as in eternal promises; and trust God for bodily provision, as for our souls salvation; he trusteth not God for food and rayment

trust

trusteth him not for the salvation of his soul.

Because they are the necessary support of life: God having given to us life, hath promised to give all the necessary supports of it, till our appointed time of death comes: Hence some Divines affirm, that we may ask of God the necessaries of this life absolutely, and that the promises of necessary supports are absolute, not conditional: the Petition in the Lords Prayer for the necessaries of this life runs in an absolute manner, as all other Petitions, [*Give us this day our daily bread*] and outward necessities of the life that now is, are good for us; so that in praying for them (say they) we may not say, Lord give me this day my daily bread, if good for me, but Lord give it, because it is good for me. But I will not take upon me to determine this.

N. B.

It is to convince the world that Godliness is profitable; there is no loss either of time, or of profit which is spent in holy exercises: the worldling, like *Pharaoh*, is ready to say to such as give themselves up to a diligent and constant exercise of Religious duties; *Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore ys say, Let us go that we may serve God in the wilderness. Exod. 5.17.* Oh know thou

thou O worldling, praying times are gain-
 ing times; that men doth not idle away
 his time who spends it in Religious service;
 Believers do gain by kneeling on their
 knees to God, as by working with their
 hands in shop or field; they get the best and
 most profit who get it by prayer: that is
 no profitable gain that is gotten by labour
 without prayer: it is Mammon of iniquity
 that is obtained without Godliness. Obey as
 that men would set up the trade of Godli-
 nels! then they would never say or thinke
 in their hearts, as those worldly wretches
 in *Amos 8. 5.* *When will the New Moone*
be gone, that we may sell Corn; and the
Sabbath be over, that we may set forth the
Wheat! that we may trade in buying and
 selling, and get gain. If thou art godly
 and makest Godliness thy one thing need-
 fary, the Sabbath shall be no hinderance
 but the holy keeping thereof shall be
 great furtherance of thy earthly profits.

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CHAP. XII.

SECT. I.

IF Godliness hath the promise of the *Quest. 2.*
 life that now is, Why doth not God
 make good his promises to godly men? we
 would think that every godly man should
 be as *Job*, the richest in the places where
 they live; yea, none should be rich and ho-
 nourable, and enjoy long life, but godly
 men, seeing the promises of these things
 are made unto them. I know no question
 more necessary to be resolved than this;
 for there is nothing makes men to keep off
 from Godliness, and hardens men in their
 ungodly and unlawful wayes of getting more,
 than their beholding how ill it goes with
 the outward estate of godly men, and how
 prosperously all things succeed with the
 wicked. When men see the hand of pro-
 vidence to cross the promises and threat-
 enings of God, that it is with the godly as
 if all the threatnings of this life were made
 to them; and it is with the wicked as if
 all the promises of this life were made unto
 them; the wicked flourish like green Bay-
 trees, and the godly are withered like the

F

Tree

Tree which Christ cursed, hence they make such conclusions.

1. That either both promises and threatenings are not Gods, but mens words.

2. Or that Godliness is not gainful; that there is no profit in serving the Almighty.

Or, 3. That God loves them, though they do not keep such ado as others in religious affairs.

4. That seeing they thus thrive and prosper, they shall have Heaven hereafter; and that their present prosperity is an evidence of their future happiness.

5. Hence it is that wicked men harden themselves in their wickedness, not regarding gracious promises, nor terrible threatenings: Such like impious conclusions do carnal hearts make of providential promises.

SECT. 2.

NOW then in answer to the Question concerning Gods performance of temporal promises; I will first lay down some Positions; then I will give reasons why God doth not give to all godly men all the good things of this life according to his own promise.

Position

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Position 1.

Position 1.

The happiness of godly men in this life, consists more in having the promises of them, than in the possession of the things promised: It is very observable how the words run in my Text: It is not said, Godliness hath the possession of the things of this life that now is, but hath the promises of the life that now is. *Lazarus* had the promises of all this worlds good things, yet had not the possession of them: So when it is said, *All things are yours*; it is by promise, not by possession: So *Paul* said of himself, That he had nothing, yet he possessed all things in respect of the promise; he was rich in bonds and bills, though poor in possessions: The very promises are rich possessions: the promises of wealth is riches, the promises of honour and long life, is an honour and long life: Hence *Prosper* said, *Fideli homini totus mundus divitiarum est, infideli ne quidem obolus.* This Position is a very Paradox to worldly men, who value a Misse of Pottage in the hand, more than the priviledges of godly Birth-right for the future.

N. B.

Prosper.

Position 2.

God hath reserved to himself a liberty of disposing outward things according to his pleasure, how much, and how little, to whom he pleaseth.

Position 3. The performance of temporal promises is great then made to us, when the having of outward things is a furtherance to our eternal salvation: God doth not promise any to give them what is good in it self, but what is good for them, and tends to their greater good. The salvation of our souls being the great end which God intendeth, he wisely orders all things thereunto: So that as the Apostle speaks in another case, may be said in this: *All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient for us.* All meats are good, but all are not expedient for some crazy bodies: Knives are useful things, but hurtful in the hands of a child, who hath not wit enough to use it; to keep Knives from children, is more beneficial to them: Wealth, honour, health, life, liberty, are good, but are not expedient for every godly man; so that, want of them may be more expedient for some godly men than the possession of them.

Position 4. Whether the having of outward things be necessary and expedient for us, God himself can only judge; none of us, do better know what is best for us. *Mat. 6. 3. Your heavenly Father knoweth what things you need; you do not know: We think*

ifes great estate best for us ; God knoweth it
 our ; we think health and life is best for
 eter ; God knoweth that sickness and death
 ife is more expedient for us : If Parents should
 self leave Children to their own choice, they
 ds would soon undo themselves : the Father
 f our knoweth what is best for the Child : Should
 d is God leave us to our choice, to take what
 here we think is good for us, we should do as
 and the young Prophet, who was sent abroad to
 bringather Herbs ; he not knowing all Herbs
 edid were wholesome, gathered poisonons
 re weeds, and so put death in the pot ; so
 n would all believers deal with their own
 banons, were they to carve out their own
 gh worldly estates. It is our duty to refer all
 en, to the wisdom of God : God could give
 nomo his people earthly riches, and make them
 re the Grandees of the world, but he doth
 o the, because he knoweth a meaner portion
 at for the things of this life is better for them
 on than a large. *Lazarus's* poverty was bet-
 ter for him than riches; to have *lectum strā-*
himineum, & cibum gramineum, Straw for
 our Beds, and Herbs for our Food, may be
 do better than fine Linnen, and delicious Fare ;
 5. 3. in the up-shot every one shall say, That
 his state I had was best for me, and the poor
 Christian shall say as *Luther*, It was better *Luther.*
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for me that I was *Christianns Rusticus* non *Alexander Ethnius*, a poor Rustic and a Christian, and not great *Alexander* and an Heathen.

Position 5. God doth make good the promises of life that now is to all and every godly man but with difference.

1. To some he hath given a measure of outward things full, pressed down, and running over; as *Abraham*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Job*, had great portions of the things of this life: No King so rich as *Solomon* none in all the East was to be compared to *Job* for riches; and in all ages some gods are noble and rich, but not many, saith the Apostle: Now in that God giveth to some riches and honours in abundance, it is as if he had given them to the whole body of the Elect.

2. To others he giveth a lesser measure of these things; as earthly Fathers do not give to all their children alike portions: the elder Brother goes away with a greater estate, and the younger Brothers have annual pensions allowed them: so God pleased in the dispensation of outward things to his people, to give to some a portion of the first-born, and to others less.

There

There is not a godly man but hath some health, food, and rayment, and life: *Lazarus* had so much as served him to carry him to his journey's end, to Heaven: *Having food and rayment, let us be therewith content.* 1 Tim. 6. 8. [Having food] any nourishment, be it coarse, let us be content: and rayment] having any covering of our nakedness (so the Greek word there importeth) let us be content: We have as much as God knoweth we need, and we have more than we deserve: Dost thou deserve a drop of water to quench thy thirst, or crumbs of bread to feed thy hungry belly? God doth give to all HIS daily bread, convenient for them.

As long as God gives us all things which are absolutely necessary to our eternal salvation, as grace, pardon, &c. it is enough; it is too low to say, that these are equivalent to temporals, they are transcendently more excellent than all temporal goods: the whole world is nothing to pardon and grace; if riches were as necessary as grace and pardon, every godly man should have them: We have therefore great cause of contentment, if God for hidden reasons from us, doth deny us the things of the life that now is. Position 6

poor, that is rich in grace; that godly man is not unhappy, that hath Christ for his portion; though he hath no food for his body, yet he hath Manna for his soul; though he hath no rayment for his body, yet his soul is cloathed with glorious Robes. a great Potentate in all his glory, is not arrayed like a sanctified soul.

Position 7. The fault of non-performance of the promise of the life that now is, is in us, not in God; we fail in the condition of the promise, we fail in our duty: *Your iniquities have with-held good things from you*, saith the Prophet: Either we fail in our duty, or we are unthankful for what we have, or we are not wise stewards of Gods blessings, or God seeth that we would wax proud and wanton; therefore God sometimes inflicteth poverty as a correction of our sins and negligence in our duties. Did every man rise up to the condition of the promises, we should find God making good temporal promises; did every godly man walk in the steps of *Abraham*, they might be as rich as *Abraham*. *Certe si beneficiorum Deus essemus capaces, liberalius nobiscum agere Deus*, saith Calvin: Assuredly, if we were fit and meet to receive Gods benefits, he would open his hand, and deal more liberally.

Calvin.

liberally : Oh therefore in thy want of many outward mercies , search and try thy wayes; it may be sin is the cause, and do not blame God with unfaithfulness in his promises : for know, that though God hath promised outward things to Godliness, yet in case we fail in our duty, he will withhold from us the good things promised : outward things are promised upon condition of walking in , and keeping his statutes and ordinances.

SECT. 3.

The Reasons why God doth not give to all godly men the good things of this life, are ;

TO try whether his people will live the life of faith in outward things, as in spiritual and eternal things ; the having abundance of outward things is an impediment to this living by faith, which is most exercised in wants : Many godly men had not been so rich in faith, had they not been so poor in this worlds goods : It is one reason why God turneth his people as he did Job, out to the dunghill, claps wings on their estates, and makes them to fly away, that he may inure them to live by faith.

Reason 1.

For conviction: 1. That the love of God

Reason 2.

God in Christ in us, is not to be gathered from having outward things; for if they were tokens of his electing and pardoning love, none should have these outward things but the godly: but we see prophane sinners, and such as are very enemies to all goodness, to abound in outward wealth; therefore they are no love-tokens. 2. To convince us that no part of the blessedness of Saints is in having outward things; they are as much blessed without them, as with them: True blessedness lies only in the fruition of grace now, and glory hereafter, not in riches: no wicked man shall taste of the true blessedness of Saints; yet they eat and drink abundantly of the milk and hony of this world: if having these outward things were part of the blessedness of Saints, they should have them: in Heaven there is none of these things, but there is all blessedness.

Reas. 3:

Because God would have his children to love his mind and desire Heaven, and nothing else: God in wisdom will not let his people have an Heaven upon Earth, lest they should love their mind Heaven less: It was a grave speech of the Emperour *Charles* the fifth to the Duke of *Venice*, shewing his treasury; *hac sunt quae nos invitos faciunt mori*; these are the things

things which make us unwilling to dye. God led *Israel* thorow a vast howling wilderness, that they might desire *Canaan*; he makes the world a wilderness to his people, that they may the more long after the heavenly Country.

CHAP. XII.

IT may now be demanded, *Whether there be any promise made to wicked men?* Quest. 3.

Some give this answer, that they are Resp. made to wicked men, but they are not made good unto them, but to the godly; as threatnings are made to the godly also, but made good upon wicked men: I will not quarrel with this word, that they are made unto wicked men; yet I will give for answer these further things.

1. That all the promises of the life present and to come, are revealed and proposed to wicked men as so many urgent invitations to faith and holiness: the Scriptures use all arguments to persuade them to Godliness; arguments drawn from mercies, from judgments, from promised rewards, and threatened judgments, from the worth of evils [damnation] and from the

the best of good things [salvation] Go, saith Christ to his Appotles, *and preach the Gospel to every creature*, and make this promise and threatning, That *whosoever shall believe shall be saved, and whosoever believeth not shall be damned*: Offer the promise of salvation to every creature; hence the great promises run indefinitely and universally without exception and limitation.

2. Every wicked man is commanded to believe the promises, and to come up to the duties annexed to the promises; they are commanded to repent, to believe, to be holy in all manner of conversation; it is their duty to repent; and upon their repentance and turning from their evil ways, the promises shall be made good to them: it is their going on in sin that keeps them off from having interest in the promises; while such they are, they can lay no more claim to any one promise of God, than a beggar to a Kingdom.

3. Notwithstanding the promises are proposed and offered to wicked men, yet in *statu quo*, while they continue wicked, they are under all Scripture woes, threatnings, and curses: our Saviour speaks terrible words, *that they are condemned already, and that the wrath of God abideth on them*,
which

which is meant in respect of threatnings :
Whiles we lye under the threatnings of
God, we lye under the wrath of God :
Divine threatnings are Gods wrath, as
well as divine plagues. Consider this ye
that are Drunkards, while you are such,
ye lye under that threatning, *No Drun-
kard shall inherit the Kingdom of God, and
of Christ* ; how dare you then lie one
hour more in that sin? did wicked men
consider Gods threatnings, how could they
be secure, and sleep (as *Peter*) amidst a
quaternion of direful threatnings.?

SECT. 2.

SEEing the promises pertain not to *Quest.*
wicked men, *Why then doth God bestow
the things of this life upon them? Why did
he give the rich glutton delicate fare, and fine
Linnen, seeing he had not a promise of so
much as of a drop of water, or of a ragg; yet
Lazarus had the promise, but wanted these
things?*

Because God delighteth in the mani. *Reas. 1.*
festation of his Philanthrophy, his general
love and goodness; for he is kind to the
just and unjust; he is good to the evil, kind
to the unthankful, and bountiful to such as
abuse

abuse his gifts to their lusts, because he is good, and doth do good freely, as the Sun shineth upon dunghills and Marble walls.

2. Because God will reward that good that is in them: Many wicked men are just in their dealings, diligent in their Callings, and externally virtuous in their lives. *The hand of the diligent maketh rich, saith Solomon.* God crowns even the diligence of wicked men with a great increase; God will be indebted to no man; where external goodness is, he giveth external rewards; to temporal service, temporal rewards: Men shall not have to plead what they did, how they lived; their mouths will be stoppt with this; Son, thou receivest good things for what thou hast done.

3. To allure them to follow after Godliness: outward temporal rewards are motives to spiritual and eternal: how may they argue from the effects of Gods general love! if God bestows so many and great favours on me for my civil honesty, morality, justice, diligence, what favours will he bestow on me repenting, believing and walking in true Godliness? If God thus reward me for my external service, what glorious rewards will he freely give me, if I do serve him in spirit and in truth.

4. Becau

4. Because these outward things are all the good they shall have from a good God; it is all the Heaven that wicked and ungodly men shall have; they have their portion in the things of this life; so *Abraham* told the rich glutton in Hell torments, *Son, remember thou in thy life time hadst thy good things.*

More reasons might be given, but I will rather shew some difference between Gods giving the things of this life to the wicked and to the godly.

1. God giveth these things to his own, as their Father in Christ; he gives them to wicked men, as he is the common Father of all by right of Creation; so he provideth for the beasts, and all creatures in the world.

2. The good things of this life are given to the godly, as the fruits and effects of his redeeming love and special goodness; but to the wicked they are the fruits and effects of his common bounty.

3. Godly men have them as the fruit of Gods promise; wicked men have them as the fruit of Gods providence, and so other creatures have them.

4. They are given to the godly as helps and furtherances of their eternal salvation;
but

but these very things to the wicked (through their own default) are furtherances of their damnation, and will be great aggravations of their torment. Ungodly men (how great soever they are now) shall one day wish they had never been rich, great, honourable: one drop of water hereafter will be more desired by them, than all their present profits can now comfort them: *Woe be to you that laugh now, ye shall mourn; woe be to you that are full now, ye shall be hungry and thirsty, and beg for a drop of water to cool your tormented souls.*

Serm. 5. Preached Decemb. 1. 1661.

CHAP. XIII.

The Uses of both the Doctrines.

SECT. I.

Use 1.

THese Doctrines may convince the worldling, that is drowned in Atheism, that it is not in vain to serve God; there is profit in praying to the Almighty

mighty; Religion is not a broken Cistern, a barren wilderness: Dost thou believe the Scriptures? then hear what the Scripture saith, viz. That Godliness is profitable unto all things. Tell me thou that serveest Mammon more than God; Is there any thing in the whole world that is thus profitable? all these things are but profitable to thy belly, to thy back, but not to thy soul, as thou shalt see when they shall take away thy soul. There is nothing can profit thee dying but Godliness: What said they to Judas, when in horreur of conscience he cryed, *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood!* see thou to that, said they: So when the ungodly worldling shall cry to his worldly profits, *I have sinned in neglecting the duties of Godliness,* What is that to us, will they cry, see thou to it; If thou didst mind thy soul, which shortly must be in misery, or happiness, thou wouldest say, That Godliness is profitable: If God, Christ, Heaven and Salvation were esteemed great gain, thou wouldest confess Godliness is profitable.

This may inform us in what esteem Godliness is with God, in that he makes all the promises to it: there are the flowings of his grace, love, mercy, good will upon God-

Use 2.

G

liness;

linefs; for what are the promises but the free manifestations of his good will, grace and favour? all are made to Godliness, and to nothing else: how doth God love the world which is so hateful to the world!

SECT. 2.

use 3.

LET this perswade us to look after Labour for Godliness more than ever; let worldlings cumber themselves with other things, let us all make choice of the better part which shall never be taken from us: let Godliness be our one thing necessary: *This or nothing*; yea, let us mind affect and care for nothing but Godliness. When a great Counsellor and Statesman of France was leaving the Court by reason of his age; the King gave him a sheet of Paper, requesting him to write down some advice for his direction in government; the Counsellor took the Paper, and wrote at the top of the Paper, *Modus*, in the middle *Modus*, and in the end of it *Modus*, Moderation, and so delivered it to the King. So if you would have men and Angels write down in a Paper their advice to you for your good, they would write in the beginning of it, *Labour after Godliness*; in the middle

Labour

Labour after Godliness; in the end, *Labour after Godliness*. In prosecution of this Use, I will first give you some helps and means to be godly; secondly, some Motives thereunto.

1. *Means to get Godliness are these:*

Means 1.

Be convinced of the want of Godliness; nothing makes men more industrious than sense of want: It is pinching hunger that makes men labour for food; it is the sense of pain that makes men seek for ease; it is fear of poverty that makes men labour and toil for profit; it is he, and none but he that knows the misery of being ungodly, that labours day and night for Godliness; how doth he pray with groans unutterable for Godliness! how doth the want of it make him sigh! how doth his soul pant after it! Oh that I were godly! Oh that I could believe! Oh that I had Christ! this is the cause why the generality of men look not after Godliness, because they think themselves to be godly, and have Godliness enough to carry them to Heaven, as if this hour were the last of their dayes; this ignorance of their danger makes many men go dancing to Hell: millions are now suffering Hell-torments for their self-

conceitedness about Godliness. Blessed the man that is sensible of his want of Godliness. *Primus gradus ad salutem videre nullam salutem*, the first step to Godliness, is conviction of ungodliness.

Means 2.

Inform your selves what is true Godliness: this is one great cause of the miscarriage of many a precious soul; they live and dye in an ungodly state; they take that to be Godliness which is not Godliness; no mistake more pernicious than mistaken Godliness; such mistakes do fluster men into Hell.

1. Some do miserably mistake bodily exercise for Godliness: if they do abstain from meat for certain dayes, lie upon the ground, beat their breasts, whip and scour themselves, and deny themselves the lawful comforts of this life; they take this to be Godliness of the greatest magnitude; yet their devotion is much admired by others. My Text tells us, this is not Godliness, it will not profit us: Let a man set himself upon the highest Pinnacle of such devotion yet he is as far from Godliness, as he stands in the valley of prophaneness, wallows in it; this is superstition, and not Godliness; this is but the doctrines of men and not Godliness.

2. Some mistake Civility for Godliness : if they do live orderly and unblameably before men ; if they are no Drunkards, no Adulterers, they think they are godly ; there is a shew of Godliness in this, but Godliness it is not : Pharisaical Godliness is an abomination in the sight of God ; it is but Philosophical, and not Scriptural Godliness.

3. Some mistake their good meanings, their good intentions, their good duties, their good Church-priviledges for Godliness. *Rom. 2. He is not a Jew which is one outwardly ;* that is baptized, cometh to Church, partaketh of outward priviledges, and performeth outward worship ; this is not Godliness : the true Godliness and godly men are not without theſe things : it is folly to take the cloaths of a man for the man himſelf. Oh therefore inform your ſelves that Godlineſs conſiſteth in renovation of heart, in abhorring all ſin, inward and outward, and an application of your ſelves to all duties and works of Godlineſs : this is gain, and all other things are but loſſe ; this is gold, and all things elſe but ſcums, when the tryal of Godlineſs ſhall be made.

Beware of ſuch opinions and practices, Means 3.

as are destructive to Godliness: St. Paul exhorts us, *2 Tim. 2. 16. To shun prophane and vain babblings, which make increase not to more ungodliness*; noting there are opinions and answerable practices in the world (what shew of reason and devotion soever they may have) yet are in themselves prophane and vain, and tend to the increase of ungodliness, if once it get place.

Means 4.

Labour to convince your selves of your own impotency to attain to Godliness by your own power: *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Who can bring forth Godliness out of an unclean and unrenewed heart?* It is called Godliness, because it is from God; it is the divine nature, it is a gift from above; it is not a plant springing from a root in nature: this conviction is necessary; men do neglect to follow after Godliness, because they perswade themselves they can be godly when they will, which makes men to delay their repentance and conversion unto God.

Means 5.

Be diligent in attending on all Gods Ordinances, in the use of which God works Godliness; these are the golden Pipes through which this golden Oyl runs in every Virgins Lamp; in them we converse

with God ; and converse with him, hegets conformity to him : Children by conversing with their Parents, learn to imitate them. *Moses* conversed with **God** a while, and his face shone : No men are such shining Christians as they who most converse with **God** in holy Ordinances.

Study the knowledge of the Word of **God** ; his Will is the Rule of Godliness ; it is therefore called *the doctrine according to Godliness*. *Titus* 1. 1. Godliness is nothing else but our conformity to the Will of **God** revealed in his Word. Means 6.

Resolve upon that course of life, let what will come, or can come, if you will live godly in **Christ Jesus**, expect much opposition and contradiction from the world : nothing is more hated than Godliness ; holy resolution is as necessary as the profession of Godliness : he that is not resolved to follow Godliness against all oppositions of the world, will soon stumble and fall into ungodliness at every stone of offence lying in the way. Means 7.

Beware of conversing with such as are enemies to Godliness, that are scoffers at it ; no greater hinderers to Godliness, and tempters to ungodliness than such persons : such as these said, *Do any of the Pharisees*
G 4 believe Means 8.

believe on Christ? they were enemies to Christ, and endeavoured that none should follow him: with the froward thou wilt learn frowardness: Therefore *David* cries out, *Away from me all ye wicked, I will keep the Commandments of my God*: He that will walk in the wayes of God, must keep himself from the society of the ungodly: ill examples are more efficacious than good Rules and Precepts.

Means 9.

See that ye come to Christ who is full of grace; it is the very purchase of Jesus Christ, who dyed not only to purchase our souls, but grace also; not only to redeem us from Hell, but also from our ungodly conversations; come therefore to him as the fountain of all holiness: All the wise Virgins in Heaven and Earth cannot give you one drop of Godliness; they may command it, exhort and perswade you to Godliness; but none but Christ can infuse Godliness into your souls.

SECT. 3.

Motives to get Godliness.

Motive 1.

CONSIDER that Motive in the Text: *is profitable*: there is not a man living, but is for profit; it is that you do

fire

fire; it is that you labour for, that you contract and bargain for: you sometimes labour and bargain for vain things that bring in no profit: there is need of arguments to perswade men to get profit: Say but this bargain, or that thing, is very profitable for you, you say enough; now here the Apostle tells us, that Godliness is profitable to all intents and purposes: it is gain in every thing.

It is the greatest profit for quantity; it is, and it will be found to be greater profit than the gain of the whole world; God and Christ are the gain thereof. God saith to Abraham, *I will be thy exceeding great reward.* Gen. 15. 1. One said of truth; The least things of truth are precious; so say I of Godliness, *Quisquilie pietatis sunt pretiosa*; the least things of Godliness are exceeding great profit: the promises are called great promises; what great gain will be the performance of them? the gain of Godliness is compared to a treasure, because of the abundant riches thereof. Mot. 2.

It is stable and permanent gain: *durable riches,* Prov. 8. 18. other profits take their wings and flee away; this gain will never fly from us: other riches melt like Snow before the Sun, and Wax before the Fire; but Mot. 3.

but the profit of Godliness doth not so : therefore it is called *The sure mercies of David* : *sure for performance*, and *sure for continuance* : once possess them, and alwayes possess them : it is called *Treasures laid up in Heaven*, where neither moth, nor rust, nor thieves can come to spoil us of the profit of Godliness.

Mor. 4. It is a profit that will continue with us till death, and after death ; which, no worldly profit can ; that may last till death, but then it parteth from us ; we shall carry nothing out of this world ; but Godliness will go out of this world into the world to come. *Blessed are they that dye in the Lord, for their works follow them. Rev. 4. 13.*

Mor. 5. It is everlasting profit : it endureth as long as Heaven endureth, as long as God is, and eternity shall last : It is usually said in Sales of Land, *To them and their Heirs forever* : when afterward it may be that Heir prodigally wasteth and selleth what the Father purchased : but it is most infallibly true, that the profit of Godliness is *to thee and to thy soul for ever.*

Mor. 6. No interest in the promises, unless you be godly ; they are but offered and tendered to you, whiles ungodly ; but they

are not yours till you be godly. What need I say more, seeing he that is godly is rich in Earth, rich in Heaven, rich in temporals, rich in spirituals, hath an Heaven on Earth, and shall have Heaven in Heaven! the day is coming wherein all men shall say, No profit like to Godliness, and will give away all for Godliness, if they could purchase it; the day of death and judgment will make all say, that which men will not now believe when told them, *viz.* that Godliness is profitable unto all things.

CHAP. XIV.

THIS should encourage such as are godly, to go on the wayes of Godliness. *2 Cor. 7. 1. Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God:* Having these promises, we should study Godliness; we cannot be too godly: so many promises, so many motives to Godliness; let others follow after the world, follow their lusts, let us follow Godliness: go on still, and leave the ninety nine things of the world, and seek

use 4.

seek this Pearl of great price : Apply yourselves to the constant practice of all the duties of Godliness, because every duty of Godliness hath many promises : Prayer hath many rich promises made to it, so hath hearing of the Word, receiving the Sacrament, repenting, believing; not one work of piety but hath his promise : The wicked shall repent of their seeking and following after their lusts, but you shall never repent of your following after Godliness : the worldling shall repent of all his gain; he shall wish, Oh that I had never been so rich ! but no godly man shall say, Oh that I had never been so godly ! They shall leave all, and lose all; they shall leave houses, lands and living, and lose God, Christ, and Heaven too : but you that are godly, shall leave the world, because it is not worth the having and keeping, and shall enjoy God, Christ, and Heaven for ever : Oh therefore go on in an eager pursuit of Godliness, and tell the foolish world wondring at thy diligence in all godly exercises, what promises thou hast. Doth any one ask, What ails thee, that thou art so much in praying, hearing, and such like religious exercises ? tell them, I have the promises of Heaven and Earth which

which shall be performed. Do any ask of thee, Why art thou so strict, so precise, so shy of sin, and dost not as the most do? tell them thou hast great and precious promises of Heaven and Earth. Tell all the world that it is thy shame and grief that thou art no more godly, that thou dost not do more for God than thou dost; that it is thy desire, and it shall be thy endeavour to be more godly. When thou findest thy own heart fearful because of the worlds opposition of Godliness, say to thy self, Shall such a man as I fear, who have such great and precious promises? — When thou findest thy heart dull, slothful, negligent in the work of Godliness, say to thy self, Oh my soul! remember what precious promises are made to me: Shall I be negligent having such promises made to me! nothing should more quicken us to our duty, than the promises of God.

CHAP. XV.

SECT. I.

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CHAP. XV.

SECT. I.

THis may serve as an Use of Admonition to the godly; you see that you have an interest in all the promises of the present and

use

and future life; then be admonished to beware of these evils.

1. Of discontentedness with the present allotment of divine providence: Having the promises of this life, murmur not because you have not such a large portion of the good things of this life, as others have; content your selves with the promise of these things: he that murmureth at Gods providences disposing of outward things, dishonoureth the faithfulness of God in his promises, as if he were either unwilling or unable to make good his Word to us: rejoyce as much in having the promises, as you would in the performance of them. One said of *Queen Elizabeth*, *That a Courtier might make a better meal of one good look from her, than of a good gift from some other King.* More truly may we say of the promises of God, a Christian might make a better meal in a gracious promise, than on a large gift of his common providence.

Quest.

How may a Christian in his wants draw contentment from the promise of this life?

Resp. I.

Consider that you have an interest in the promise: your present happiness lies more in promises, than in performances; in reversion, than in possession.

2. Consider

2. Consider that the promise is made good in some measure for the present, so far as the wisdom of God judgeth expedient for your greater good: what we have for the present, is best for the present: for the promises distill goodness, as the clouds distill Rain, according to Gods ordering: when showers are best for us, the promises come down in showers; when drops are more expedient for us, the promises, like clouds, do let fall some drops, and are blown over for the present.

3. That such is Gods love and power in effecting the promise, that he can and will in due time perform his word of promise to us; let things go as they list, let all things seem impossible, improbable, yet God can make his word good, and will in due time: it was improbable, yea impossible (as to nature) that *Abraham* should have a child in his old age; yet *Rom. 4. 18. He believed in hope against hope*; the reason given is, because he was fully persuaded, that what God had promised, he was able to perform: God can make his promises break thorow all difficulties; he will make mountains to become vallies before his promises: it is an Atheistical question of unbelievers, *Can God prepare a Table in the wilderness?* God can,

can, God did : it was *Moses's* great sin of unbelief, when he said; *Must I fetch water out of this Rock?* yet *Moses*, through the power of God, made rivers of water to gush out of a dry Rock : live then by faith in them, till God perform his promises : faith will transubstantiate promises into the very mercies themselves ; it will turn want into fulness , poverty into riches.

4. Consider much the wisdom of God in taking the fittest times and seasons to perform his promise : as a word spoken in season, so a promise performed in season, is like *Apples of gold in pictures of silver* : God knoweth the fittest season, we do not : he is *optimus opportunitatis arbiter*, the only and best Judge of times and seasons.

5. Wait on God till he doth make good his promise : it is the property of faith to wait. *He that believeth will not make haste* : *Isa.* 28. 16. will not outrun Gods determinate time, but waiteth till the appointed time ; it will earnestly expect , but patiently wait : it is confident, because God hath promised ; but will wait , though it tarry till the appointed time.

6. By sticking to Gods promise, and holding to this conclusion ; Oh I shall not

want what is good : Though I want what I would have, I shall have that which is best : though I have not that which is most, it will make a man say with *David*, *The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I shall not want.* *Psal.* 23. 1. and with *Paul*, He will not leave me, nor forsake me in my wants. *Heb.* 13. 5.

7. By meditating seriously and frequently on the promises of God : As the Mariner at Sea in the night time casteth his eye after the Pole-star to direct him in his passage; so believers in their distress, do cast their thoughts on the promise of God for support : Meditation on the promise will stay the soul up, and make it to hold up its head above the troubled waters; meditation will suck comfort from the promise, when a man sucks not out all the mercy in the promise.

SECT. 2.

2. **H**AVING such promises, oh let the Godly beware of fretting at Gods bounty toward the wicked in this life: Gods liberal hand to the wicked is an eye-sore to good hearts; many times their eye is evil, because his eye is good; and they are apt to
H murmur

murmure, because God giveth to them the penny; as they in the Parable did. *Mat. 20.* Oh beware of this evil, seeing you have the promise of these things, and better promises too. You know how the Prodigal Brother murmured at his Father, because he killed the fatted Calf, and called for the Robe and Ring for his Son that was returned home: What said his Father to him? *Son, remember thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine, Luk. 15. 30.* God saith to his people: Fret not, cease from murmuring, when you see God giving the Ring and the Robe, and the fatted Calf to wicked men: *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine; Grace and glory is thine, and every good thing is thine.* Oh therefore, when thy heart begins to murmur at the prosperity of wicked men, think what full, what precious promises thou hast, remember them, and think that they are thine, and it will calm the tempests in thy heart. How ill did the Lord resent the *Israelites* murmuring, because the *Egyptians* had Leeks, Onions, Flesh-pots, and they in want! he had promised them a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, that they should not envy nor lust after the *Egyptian* Flesh-pots: God having promised

in the promised Heaven and all the good things of the life to come; 'tis a fore provocation to fret at the wickeds having the things of this life.

Having such promises, it should teach every godly man to walk comfortably and cheerfully in the world in every state and condition; let the world see there is much in Gods promises; let the world see that you believe them, that you count them rich possessions; let the world see that a godly man can live as comfortably on the promises of God, as the wicked can on all their delicate fare.

CHAP. XVI.

HENCE we may see in what a sad condition all ungodly men are; let them laugh, oppose, scoff at Godliness in others; let them take their fill of this worlds profits and pleasures, and live as gloriously every day, as the Sun shineth; yet they are the men of Gods curse; they have all the threatnings of the life that now is, and of the death which is to come: however the long-sufferance and goodness of God may for a while

use 6.

hold off the execution of all the temporary judgments threatened against them; yet let them know, that the day is coming, wherein all the threatnings shall be made good; all the curses and woes shall light on them; all the plagues of the mighty God shall fall upon them; and whatever God hath laid up in the treasury of his wrath, in Hell, shall be their portion for ever: As all promises shall be fulfilled, so all threatnings: God is true in both, faithful in both, just in both, and powerful to perform both. What will wicked men do? Where will the ungodly man appear in the day of executing threatnings! he hath no promise of mercy; and having no promise, he hath no hope of mercy; having no promise, he shall never obtain any mercy at all.

Use 7.

Admire then the blessed state of good men, because they are sure of every good thing in this life; this is not the one half of their happiness; they are sure of Heaven; as sure as Heaven is, they are sure of it; for they have the promises of it, and all Gods promises are most sure and certain, and shall be fulfilled: Godly men in their worst condition, are better than

the greatest wicked man on earth. What if they have nothing but hunger and nakedness, famine, contempt and reproach, yet they have the sure promise of Heaven; they are rich in poverty, happy in misery; they are honourable in contempt and reproaches; they are happy living, happy dying, happy dead because of these promises; *O fortunati bona si sua norint!* O happy Saints, did you know your goods, the end of your wealth! none but God knoweth how rich, how happy you are.

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THE
Unprofitableness
OF
WORLDLY GAIN:
AND THE
Loss of Losses,
Set forth in four Sermons
ON MARK 8. 36, 37.

By that Eminent and Learned Divine, Mr. *Thomas Byrdall*, M. A. late Minister of the Word, and Preacher at *Walsall*, in the County of *Stafford*.

L O N D O N,
Printed *Anno Dom.* 1666.



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and f.



THE
Unprofitableness
OF
WORLDLY GAIN.

MARK 8. 36.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37. *Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

Serm. 6. Preached Decemb. 8. 1661.

CHAP. I.



Our Saviour, *vers.* 34. told the people, upon what terms he was willing to receive into his service any who were desirous of it: *Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.*

I Let

1. Let him deny himself, *se, sua, suos*.
 1. Himself; his own understanding, will, affections, inclinations, yea, life it self.
 2. Let him deny *sua*, his enjoyments, his houses, lands, livings, wealth, liberty.
 3. Let him deny *suos*, his relations, Father, Mother, Wife, Children, all relations and friends, for the love of Christ and his Gospel.

2. This is not all; but he must also take up his cross; he must not only part with the profits and dignities of the world, but he must willingly, readily, chearfully take up the cross, undergo afflictions, persecutions for Christ and his Gospel: so let him follow me in the way of faith, Christian profession and obedience.

These are hard conditions; where is the man that is willing to subscribe them? therefore for our encouragement to submit to these terms, our Saviour in the preceding verse, and in my Text, sheweth what great advantages the performance of these harsh conditions will bring to them; as also what great damage the despising of them will be unto them. *Vers. 33. Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel, the same shall save it: as who should say;*
 That

That which the world judgeth to be destruction, is salvation; and what it judgeth salvation, is destruction. He that is willing to lay down this mortal life for the sake of Christ, he shall gain life eternal: so then, to deny our lives for Christ, is the means to attain eternal life; there is no loss in this; the yoke is easie, though this saying be hard.

But what shall we gain by denying our profits, our goods, our riches and preferments? 'Tis an hard condition to part with all these things, to lay them down at Christs feet; our Saviour answereth this in my Text; What if ye do lose the world? ye shall by that loss save your souls: What if you gain the world, and reject Christ? by this gain you will lose your souls. 'Tis a thousand times more profitable for a man to part with riches, lands, preferments, and to save his soul, than to keep these things when Christ requires them, and to lose his precious soul: It is better to part with Earth and to gain Heaven, than to gain Earth and to part with Heaven. *For what shall it profit a man, &c.*

CHAP. II.

THe words are a vehement Interrogation: *What shall it profit a man, and what shall a man give in exchange?*

These Interrogations in Scripture are all wayes very earnest denyals; it shall not profit a man at all; there is nothing to be given in exchange for the soul if it be once lost: There is more meant in the words, than that it shall not profit a man at all; it denoteth that man shall receive the greatest loss that can be imagined: the loss of the soul passeth all understanding, it is the loss of losses; there is no possibility of recovering a lost soul; *semel damnatus, semper damnatus*, once damned, and for ever damned.

Look upon the words, and you may observe that our Saviour doth not say; *What shall it profit a man if he gain many hundreds, or thousands? many ten thousands are nothing comparable to the soul: Nay, he doth not say, What shall it profit a man if he gain many hundreds of thousands? yea many millions of gold and silver are not to be compared to our souls: neither doth he say, What shall it profit a man, if* he

he gain the richest and greatest Kingdom, yea many Kingdoms? even Kingdoms are of no value in regard of our souls.

Our Saviour passeth by these petty profits, and puts the case thus; What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world? if he shall gain all the wealth, all the gold and silver, all the lands and honours in the world: if he had (as *Adam* in his first daies) the whole world in possession, yet saith he, The gain of the world is nothing, if he lose his soul: and if a man should offer the whole world in exchange for his lost soul, to redeem it from the eternal flames of Hell, it will not be accepted: if a man shall willingly part with the whole world, and save his soul, he gaineth infinite profit by losing the whole world: Oh seriously ponder on this, you that venture the loss of your souls to gain a little profit; perhaps a few shillings or pounds, a few hundreds of pounds, and care not by what means you gain, so you get gain: Oh consider this ye swinish drunkards, and prophane swearers, that venture the loss of your souls, not for profit, but for a vain oath, and for a base lust.

In the words we have these things offered to our serious consideration and choice.

I. The

The Unprofitableness

1. The gain of the whole world, and the loss of our souls; if you care not for the salvation of your immortal souls, then make choice of the gain of this world, and let your souls perish everlastingly.

2. The saving of our souls with the loss of the world: we may be put to this choice: either now save thy soul, or lose the world.

3. The incomparable worth of our souls above the world; thy soul, mine, or his soul, is more worth than the whole world: for the price of redemption, it cannot recover and redeem the soul.

4. The words are Christs appeal to every man: 'Tis as if he had said, Be you Judges your selves, whether that man be a gainer, that gaineth the whole world, grasping at the honours, profits, pleasures, preferments of it in his hand, and when he dyeth, he loseth his soul for ever and ever; put both into the ballance of the Sanctuary, and weigh them, and give forth your judgment which is the best gain.

CHAP. III.

FROM the words I will present to your saddest consideration three Propositions, which I will handle ; then will I apply them to our selves.

1. The saving of our souls is invaluable Prop. 1. profit.

2. That man is no gainer at all, who gaineth the world with the loss of his soul.

3. That the loss of our souls is the loss of losses.

He that loseth the whole world, loseth as it were a drop of a bucket, and the dust in the ballance, in comparison of him that loseth his precious soul : were there more worlds than one ; as many worlds as there be Kingdoms in the world ; should a man have them all in his possession, and then lose them all, he doth not lose so much as that poor man that doth for the love of the world, or a base lust, lose his precious and immortal soul. Whiles I shall handle these Propositions, let me intreat you in the words of the Prophet *Isa. 46. 8. Shew yourselves men* ; that is, men of reason ; and consider what shall be said, you that regard the world more than your souls. For the first ;
The

The Unprofitableness

The saving of our souls is an invaluable gain.

What *Solomon* saith of wisdom, may be spoken of the soul: *The Merchandise of it is better than the Merchandise of Silver, and the gain thereof than fine Gold: She is more precious than Rubies, and all the things that thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her.* I desire riches, and all manner of precious things, and as many of them as thou canst desire; yet the whole world, and ten worlds more are not to be compared to the soul of a man: There is no valuable consideration for a soul, but only the precious blood of *Jesus Christ*. This truth will be evident, if we consider these following particulars.

I. Consider what a most precious thing the soul of man is in it self: I shall not insist on all the particular excellencies of the soul, as its divine original, that it cometh from the hands of *God* immediately; the Father of Spirits is still breathing this breath of life into the body by Creation; the very *Philosopher* calleth the soul, *divine animal particulam*. Neither will I speak of the immateriality and spirituality of the soul: albeit it is the noble excellency of the soul of man, that it is a spiritual substance:

is a spirit ; so God is, so the holy Angels are ministring spirits. Neither will I speak of the more noble faculties of the soul , the understanding and will : As it is an understanding spirit, so all things whatsoever are within the souls cognizance , it is apprehensive of every intelligible object ; it is a willing spirit , because it can embrace every good.

I shall only instance in three things, which set forth the incomparable worth of the soul.

1. It is a living soul, which is the most noble excellency of it ; therefore St. *Augustine* said, *That a Worm is a more noble creature than the Sun*, because the Worm is a living creature, the Sun a dead thing : Oh what is the soul of man that is such a noble living creature ! the rational life is the best of lives : What is thy body if thy soul were not in it ? a lump of Clay, a stinking carcase, and it dwindles into dust and ashes : Yea, what is all the world ? What is Heaven it self, if the soul were not a living substance ? life is absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of the world that now is, and of that which is to come : What are earthly Kingdoms, and heavenly Crowns, if we have no life to enjoy them ?

I

2. It

2. It is an immortal Being: it is a small happiness to live a while, and anon to dye, and to be turned into nothing. The very thoughts that we must dye, and part with all things, is that which sowreth all the sweetest contentments of this life; but now our souls cannot dye: When a man dyes, it is the body dyeth, not his soul: 'tis the body that suffers corruption, not the soul; the soul of man lives in *articulo mortis*, in the very point of death; and after death either in Heaven, or in Hell, in eternal weal or woe: This immortality of the soul, is the incomparable excellency of it above the world, which is a perishing thing: All the profits, honours, comforts of this world are transitory and perishing: so is it not with thy soul; but 'tis immortal as God is, and as Angels are; only with this difference; God is only immortal by nature, but Angels and souls are by grace, and through Gods sustentation of them in their Beings.

3. The soul is most precious in respect of her capacity: Oh the rare and glorious excellencies of which thy soul, and every mans soul is capable of! 'Tis thy soul that is capable of bearing the Image of Gods Holiness, Righteousness, and the true knowledge

knowledge of God are such pretious excellencies, that none but a reasonable soul is capable of ; none but rational spirits are Subjects capable of the graces of the Spirit of God : Thy soul is capable of the Peace of God which passeth all understanding; of the Joyes of the Holy Ghost, which are most glorious and unspeakable : Thy soul is capable of Heavens blessedness, and Hells misery : of drinking of those Rivers of pleasures which are at Gods right hand, and of those Rivers of fire and brimstone which are in Hell. It is thy soul that is capable of communion with, vision and fruition of God, and of the loss of God : tis thy soul that can only see him that is invisible ; tis thy soul that can know what the losse of the vision and fruition of God is. All the happinesse of the body hereafter, is but the redundance of the happinesse of thy soul ; and all the misery of the damned bodies is redundant from the soul : Thy body would not be sensible of Hell flames, were it not for thy soul. Finally, thy soul is capable of the fruition of God, and of the losse of God to eternity ; for being an immortal spirit, it shall run parallel to eternity ; the happinesse of it shall be immortal, and the torments im-

I 2 mortal;

mortal: as the soul is a never-dying spirit, so the worms that shall gnaw it, shall be never-dying worms; and the unspeakable comforts of it, shall be never-dying comforts: and herein lyes the best of Heaven, that the soul being immortal, shall be eternally happy; this is also the worst of Hell, that the soul being immortal, shall be eternally miserable: you may see by these particulars, what a precious gain the salvation of our souls is.

CHAP. IV.

2. **I**N the next place, we shall better understand what precious gain the soul of man is, by considering what an invaluable price they put upon a soul, who know better what the worth of a soul is. Swine trample upon Pearls, because they cannot know the value of them: offer to a man a Diamond, who never knew the worth of it, he will value it no more than a piece of painted Glasse or a Pebble: 'tis the skilful Lapidary that can put a just value and esteem upon it. I shall present these particulars to your consideration.

1. Consider how God the Maker and Creator

Creator of all souls esteems and valueth them: nothing in all the world is precious to him but souls; that he was willing to give his Son out of his bosom, to be the price of souls. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*; he so deeply loved the souls of men, that he gave not a world to save them; that price would not obtain one soul; neither did he give an Angel from Heaven, nor many Angels from Heaven, to be the price of the redemption of our souls: the death of Angels could not have purchased one soul: but God gave his only begotten Son, and none but he was a valuable price to gain souls: See how the great God doth value one poor soul!

2. Consider the salvation of our souls to have been the great subject of Gods eternal thoughts and counsels: 'Tis no lesse than a blasphemous absurdity to conceive that the great God would lay out his eternal thoughts, and everlasting purposes, about the gaining of souls, were they not incomparably precious in his esteem, *Ephes. 1.4. He hath chosen us before the foundation of the world*; There you see that God did set his thoughts upon the salvation of souls, before he set his thoughts upon the Creation

of this glorious Fabrick of the world ; and for this very end doth he keep up the world, that he may save all the souls he hath chosen : Heaven and Earth cannot passe away, till all elect souls be brought in to Christ; when that is done, the world shall soon be taken down : Shall not the salvation of our souls be the great subject of our own thoughts ! Oh how many are there, who scarce have one serious thought of their poor souls salvation !

3. Consider how the Lord Jesus doth value our souls: though his Father sent and gave him, yet it was also his own spontaneous and voluntary act in giving himself for a price to redeem souls: *He loved me, and gave himself for me*, saith the Apostle: Surely our souls must be precious gain, that nothing but the blood of Christ could purchase them: What pains did Christ take, what pains did he endure for thy soul ! he was scourged, crucified, he was buried : all that he did, all that he suffered, was for thy soul. When the Jews beheld Christ weeping over dead *Lazarus*, *Behold* said they, *how he loved him* ! Behold Christ sweating drops of blood over thy soul, bleeding over thy soul, enduring the unsupportable wrath of God for thy soul.

Behold

Behold how he loved our souls ! the great dignity of our souls is seen in the infinite dignity of the price.

4. Consider how precious thy soul is to the Holy Ghost : how doth he move upon the face of thy soul , dropping many precious motions to urge thee ! how doth he enlighten, convince, strive with thy soul ! how doth he wooe thy soul ! how is he grieved when thou dost quench his motions ! what gifts doth he bestow upon our souls ! how willing is he to enrich our souls with his graces ! he is willing to lead our souls in the way to salvation , as a Mother or Nurse leads the weak child : Certainly our souls are marvelous profit, that the glorious Trinity have such a care of them, that each person hath his peculiar work appropriated to him, in order to our salvation : the Father electeth us in Christ, the Son redeems us, the Holy Ghost sanctifies us, and all to gain our souls.

5. Consider the manifold arguments God in his Word useth to win our souls to him : How doth God command, exhort, entreat, beseech us, expostulate with us ! why will ye damn your souls ! what precious promises to allure us to him ! what terrible threatnings to drive us to him ! how

doth he draw souls with cords of love to himself ! The Apostle, 2 Cor. 5. 20. sheweth how much God did value a soul : *as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christs stead to be reconciled unto God.* God beseecheth you for your souls : Christ prayeth you for your souls : all his Ministers in their stead pray you to give up your souls : we beseech you by the mercies of God, by the love of Christ. Can we imagine that the Most High God would thus condescend to use such beseechings and entreaties, if our souls, and the winning of them were not of unspeakable value !

6. Consider what joy and rejoycing there is in Heaven, when but one poor soul among many hundreds is gained to Christ. *Luk. 15. 10. There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.* When Angels see a sinner mourning, confessing, humbled, hating his former evil courses, following after holiness ; for Angels know that we repent by the true fruits and effects of repentance ; they rejoyce that this day is a Son begotten unto God ; this day another heir of salvation ; we have another fellow-servant : so precious is one soul to the Angels, that they are willing and ready to pitch their Tents about

about the soul, to guard and protect it: yes, those glorious Angels will come flying from Heaven to conduct, to carry, to accompany the soul to Heaven.

7. Consider what transcendent and most glorious things God hath prepared for the entertainment of our souls: our Saviour tells us, *Joh. 14. 2. I go to prepare a place for you: I am going up to Heaven to prepare Heaven for your reception; to prepare Thrones and Crowns, and Robes and Pleasures, and Joy and Glory for you.* What preparations are made for the entertainment of earthly Princes! they expect that great preparations should be made for them. Oh then what great thoughts hath the Great God of our souls, that he should make such great preparations in Heaven, to entertain our souls, when they depart hence!

CHAP. V.

Moreover, let us consider what esteem and value the very Devils in Hell put upon souls.

1. Consider how the Devil puts an higher esteem on thy soul, than on the Kingdoms

Kingdoms and Glory of this world: he will tell thee, he will give a man the Kingdoms of the Earth, so he may have his soul: with this temptation he assaulted Christ, *Mat. 4. 9. All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* As the King of Sodom said to Abraham, *Gen 4. 21. Give me the souls, and take the goods to thy self:* So the Devil saith to man, Give me thy soul; give up thy soul to thy lusts, and take the goods of the world to thy self. All the temptations baited with profit, with which he tempts men, is only in reference to their souls; he doth not so much aim to make men rich, great, honourable in the world, as at the destruction of their souls: Oh that ever men should set the things of this world to their hearts, which the Devil sets at his heels!

2. Consider how the Devil takes all the pains his wisdom, power, and strength can, to gain the souls of men; he walks to and fro the whole Earth that he may gain a soul; he compasseth Sea and Land to make a Proselyte of Hell. The Apostle tells us, *1 Pet. 5. 8. Your adversary the Devil as a roaring Lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour; he is restless and indefatigable, and very watchful, giving his eyes neither slumber*

not

nor sleep, to devour a soul : if the damned Devils were capable of joy, what triumphs would there be in Hell, when he hath gained one poor soul ! we doubt not but it is some contentation to his malicious nature, when he hath devoured a soul : Can we think that the Devil would thus traverse the Earth to and fro, did not he know too well the worth of souls !

3. Consider, that all the opposition he makes, is against the salvation of souls ; 'tis true, he fights against God, Christ, and the Gospel, against Faith and Holiness, but all in reference to the soul, that he may destroy it : he keeps men from the means of salvation, from Prayer, Word, Sacraments, that he may hinder the salvation of our souls ; he warreth against nothing but our soul. As the Prophet said of the *Medes* and *Persians*, *Isa. 13. 17*, That *they regard neither silver nor gold* : So the Devil regards not the outward comforts and contentments we have, he regards not our wealth, lands, honours ; he fighteth not against them, but against our souls.

4. Consider how he makes use of all things and persons, that by them he may gain a soul to himself : there is nothing in the world but he employs it to this purpose ; riches,

riches, pleasures, honours he useth to catch souls with; yea, your near and dear relations; as he did *Job's* wife, tempting him by her, to curse God and dye: and all wicked persons he makes great use of, making them to be so many tempting Devils to catch souls; making them to rail, to reproach, to revile the wayes of God, that men may abhor Godlinesse, and damn their souls.

5. Consider what pains he takes, how he rageth when he is in fear that any soul will be converted; how doth he oppose their conversion, and endeavour all that he can to make that work to come to nought: those who are Converts do sadly feel his power and rage against the work of grace in their hearts; none more tempted than they, none more perplexed with distracting thoughts, with doubts and fears than they.

6. Consider, that albeit the Devil knows that the damnation of souls will be the aggravation of his intolerable and inexpressible torments; that God will require the blood of all souls of him; yet he so prizeth a soul, that he will gain it if he can, though it will cost him dear at the last; he doth not regard his own torments,

so he may bring souls into the same torment with himself : by these arguments you see what a pretious gain our souls are.

My Beloved ! Doth God put such a value on our souls? doth Christ, do Angels, do Devils so highly value them? Shall not our souls be pretious in our own eyes? Shall they judge that the gain of a soul is the truest gain? Shall we slight and undervalue our own pretious souls? Shall we be careless of that on which depends our eternal weal and woe: Oh let us mind our souls which are immortal, therefore capable of immortal glory or immortal misery.

use.

Serm. 7. Preached Decemb. 15. 1661.

CHAP. VI.

Propos. 2.

THe second Proposition is, *That the man will be no gainer at last, who gaineth the world with the loss of his soul: Let us be Judges, what gainer is that man that*
gaineth

gaineth an heap of pebbles with the loss of pearls? What doth he gain, who gets a Chest full of dross, with the loss of an houle full of gold? Would not we make that man the object of our daily mocking, that stakes down a jewel for glasse? I doubt not, but we in our thoughts blame *Adam*, who for the having and eating a little forbidden fruit, lost Paradise; and *Esaú* also, who for a mess of pottage sold his birthright: Thus do all they, who for the gain of the world, hazzard the loss of their inestimable souls; they purchase pebbles for pearls, dross for gold, glasse for a rich jewel, their birthright for pottage, Paradise for an Apple; and as *Lyfsmachus* cried out, they lose a Kingdom for a draught of water: This is the reason why Christ called the rich man *Fool*, Luke 12. 20. *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee*: or rather, (as it is in the Margin of some Bibles) *do they require thy soul*: This night shall the Devils require thy soul, then whose shall these things be? you see that this man had gained much goods for many years; he could live upon his gains a merry and contented life for many years: you see he had wit enough for the world: no doubt

but

but his neighbours commended him for a wise man, yet saith **God** to him, *Thou fool*: because he gained much goods for many supposed years to come, and lost his soul for millions of millions of ages: it is madness and folly indeed to lose the soul for ever, to gain a momentary world: *Stultorum plena sunt omnia*: the world is full of such fools: how many are there in every place, who mind the world, and never think they have a soul to save or lose! The Apostle tells us, that man is worse than an Infidel that doth not provide for his own house; or (as it is in the Margin) for his own kindred, having means to do it: then surely, he that doth not provide for his soul, having means and opportunity of grace and salvation, is far worse than an Infidel; he will be more excusable, and his damnation will be more intolerable.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The Reasons of the Point.

Reason 1.

THe first reason to prove the truth of this Doctrine is, because there is no comparison between the soul and the gain of this world: the soul is more above the gold and silver of this world, then gold and silver is above straw and dung.

1. There is no comparison between heaven and earth: the soul of man in respect of its high extraction, is from heaven, heavenly: What are all the profits of the world, but from earth, earthly? the richest Mines of gold and silver lie deepest in the earth, to shew their base extraction. The soul was made to return to heaven, and it is capable of heavenly things: great pity that such a rich treasure should fall to be the portion of Devils: he is no gainer, that loseth an heavenly treasure for the gaining of an earthly.

2. There is no comparison between life and death: all things desire life, and abhor death: thy soul is a living spirit, that gives life to thy body; and the continuance of it, is the continuance of thy life: all the things

in the world are dead things, they can neither give life, nor continue life: *Is not thy life more then meat, and thy body more then raiment? A living Dogg, saith Solomon, is better then a dead Lion: a living Beggat is better then a dead Nobleman: surely then, a living soul, is better then a world of dead things, than thousands of gold and silver; the loss of one living soul, is more then the gain of a world of dead things.*

3. There is no comparison between the gaining of that which is subject to no loss and chances, and that which is subject to thousand chances: but thy soul, if it be gained, is not liable to be lost again; it is not exposed to Thieves, moths, rust, canker, corruption, as the gain of the world is. Do we not see how riches are corrupt, garments moth eaten, Gold and Silver cankered, and consumed with rust? God hath many wayes to deprive us of this worlds gain; either the fire shall burn it, or waters drown it, or Thieves rob us of it, or a Son shall riotously waste it, or an unfaithful Servant shall embezz'le and purloin it, or a Suit in Law take it from us: a thousand such like accidents may deprive us, and do and have deprived ma-

ny of the gain the which they have laboured hard for, and ventured desperately for the gaining thereof. What profit is it to lose a certain soul for such uncertain gain?

4. There is no comparison between the gain, which must and shall perish, being of a perishable nature, and that which cannot perish being incorruptible: now the gain of this world is corruptible, and will perish in time: St. Peter calls Silver and Gold, *corruptible things*, 1 Pet. 1. 18. The whole world is perishable: Heaven and Earth, and all things within the vast embracements of them, are perishable, 2 Pet. 3. 11. *All these things shall be dissolved*: but now thy soul is incorruptible; it cannot, it shall never perish; it is immortal it shall never die: What doth he gain that gaineth mortal and perishable things with the loss of his immortal soul? all the mortal and perishable things in the world cannot make amends for the loss of an immortal soul.

5. What doth he gain that gaineth a momentary thing by the loss of an eternal commodity? all the gain you can compass by your labour and diligence, is but for a moment: it is but while you live

you shall enjoy it ; your life is short, your life is uncertain : this night, this hour they may requite thy soul : but admit you should lengthen out your dayes to a thousand years, yet a thousand years is but one day ; that space of time is not so much, if compared to eternity : it is but one hour, yea less, it is but a moment : yea less, it is but a small moment ; yea it is nothing to eternity : but the gain of thy soul is eternal gain, it runs parallel to eternity, lasting as long as heaven, lasteth : Doth that man gain any thing, that gaineth momentary things, & loseth things eternal?

6. What comparison is there in that gain which a man must part with, and shall be separated from, (though he do his utmost to keep it) and that gain which a man shall never part from ; and let men, the world, sin and Devils, and all things do their worst, yet they shall never be able to separate a man from this gain, neither here nor hereafter ? Labour to gain as much as you can in this world, yet part you must, and shall with all your gain : *you shall carry nothing out of the world with you* : If when a man dies, and goes out of the world, his gains did go with him : if when they required the soul

of the rich fool, they also did require his goods to go with him, and his soul should enjoy his goods, ease, pleasure, honour in another world, there were some profit in gaining the goods of the world, though the soul be lost: but now seeing when a man goeth out of the world, his gains stay behind with him, not one penny of money, or foot of Land, or Degree of Honour goes along with him, what doth he gain? but now the gain of the soul goes along with a man into the world to come; this lives and dies and remains with him to eternity: the worldly gainer when he dies, cries out, Now I lose all, and part with all; but the soul-gainer saith, Now I gain, and shall possess all things.

7. Consider, For what use the gain of the one and of the other is: you shall see that he gains nothing that gaineth the world with the loss of his soul: when a man hath gained the whole world, what doth it serve for? only for the back to cloathe it gorgeously, and the belly to feed it delicately: If there were many worlds for a man to gain, yet he hath but one back and belly to cloath, and feed for a while; and further, he that gaineth all, can use them no more then to feed them

them with his eyes, and keep them in his hands till he dies: this is the utmost gain of the greatest gainer in the world: But now the gain of the soul is for higher and more noble and everlasting use: the soul is to enjoy God and heaven, and God and heaven are to enjoy the soul: the soul will make use of God for unspeakable and eternal happiness, and God will make use of the soul that is gained to him to praise and serve him eternally.

8. Consider these two particulars.

1. That man is no gainer at last, that shall repent of his gain that he hath gotten: ye that are greedy of this worlds gain, labour tooth and nail for it; spend your time, strength and life for the gaining it: let it be unto thee according to the desire of thy covetous and worldly heart; yet know that a little before thy death, or within a few hours after thy death, thou shalt repent of all thy labour and gains: thou shalt cry out in the language of the damned souls; O that I had never been rich! Oh that I had been the most wretched beggar in the world! Oh that I had been godly! cursed be the day of my birth! O that I had never been born! Oh cursed be all my labour and industry for the World! Oh un-

gainful gain ! But now, if thou gaineſt thy ſoul, thou ſhalt take everlaſting joy in the gain of thy ſoul, and wilt never repent of thy religious diligence in holy duties and works of ſalvation : were it poſſible for heavenly ſouls to grieve, they would repent that they did not do more ſervice for God, and give more diligence in working out their eternal ſalvation : the rich fool repenteth in hell torments, and poor *Lazarus* rejoyceth in heaven.

2. Conſider, How all the gain of the world will ſerve only to aggravate your puniſhment and torment in hell ; the more your gain, the more will your torment be ; God will deal unto thy ſoul double according to thy gain. Jam. 5. 1, 2, 3. *Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miſeries that ſhall come upon you : Ye are merry and frolick now, and dream of nothing but of golden dayes, without the thought of any miſery to come upon you ; but ye ſhall ſhortly weep and howl with damned Devils. Your riches are corrupted, your garments are moth eaten, your gold and ſilver is cankered : as we ſhould ſay, What is now become of your gains ? Tis all come to nothing, your gold and ſilver is cankered, the ruſt of*

them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh with fire: ye have heaped up treasures for the last day, all your gain will witness against you: all your unjust gains, and deceitful bargains will rise up in judgment against you; they will gnaw you like fire, and torment you like fire: you do but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath: so much money as you hoard up, so much wrath you hoard up for your souls: consider all these things, and then judge whether he be a gainer that wins the world with the loss of his soul.

CHAP. VIII.

BUT here it may be said; *May not a Christian labour for gain? cannot a man gain the world, and gain his soul?*

Quest.

There is no need to quicken men to labour for gain: We have all experience, how men have insatiable desires of worldly gain; there is more need to limit men in their desires and labours for the things of the world. I shall therefore lay down these particulars.

Resp. I.

1. We must labour, and may employ our heads and hands to procure the things of

this life : diligence in our particular Callings, is serving of God : idlenesse is a sin, and a root of more sins : God would have *Adam* labour in the state of Innocency, Paradise was not only a Garden of delight for *Adam* to take his pleasure in, but of labour also to employ himself therein.

2. We may receive the gain of the world, as the blessing of diligence in our Callings, and as precious fruit dropping from the promises of the things of this life : *Abraham's* riches did not hinder the salvation of his soul.

3. Though we may receive the gain of the world, and have an eye to it, yet it is not the thing we must chiefly respect; the gain that must be in our eye, thoughts, endeavours, desires, must be the salvation of our souls. This is the undoing of many souls, that men have an eye more to the gain of the world, than to the saving of their souls; and look wholly after outward gain, and never look after the salvation of their souls.

4. In labouring for worldly gain, let your moderation be known to all men; immoderate desires and labours after outward gain are the ruine of precious souls; when men have so much businesse in the world,

world, that they will spare no time to save their souls; and think that time lost that is spent in soul-work: when men drown themselves in the cares of the world, and in worldly labours, they drown their souls in perdition and destruction.

5. You may labour for worldly gain, but yet in subordination to the gain of the soul; first, seek the salvation of your souls, then gain: but men put off the great work of salvation to the last, and so lose their souls; as the foolish Virgins put off seeking Oyl to the last, and so lost their souls.

6. Look that what you gain be justly gotten: unjust gain doth not only bring a curse upon a mans estate, but also destruction on his soul: What shall it profit a man, if he gain much by iniquity, and damn his soul? Men are not damned for gaining, but for gaining profits unjustly; their Mammon is the Mammon of iniquity.

7. If gain flow in upon you, beware of setting your hearts on it: *Love not the world, nor the things of the world.* 1 John 2. 15. Men may have them, but must not love them: it is *δίωκα τὸ κόσμον*, the giving up of our affections to the world, is enmity against God. James 4. 4. no man more averse from Religion than worldly men:

men: where the love of the world prevails, all love to Gods and mens own souls abates in them.

8. We must so enjoy the gain of the world, that if Christ and his Gospel call us to deny, to forsake it, we must be willing to cast all away, and to cleave to Christ: if we gain, and keep the whole world, and reject Christ, his Gospel, and a good conscience, we shall be no gainers at last: sometimes Christ and the world, the Gospel and the world, a good conscience and the world cometh in competition; to gain the world in such a juncture of time, may prove the loss of your immortal souls: of such, this in my Text is principally spoken; *What shall it profit a man, &c.*

CHAP. IX.

Propos: 3.

THe third Proposition is, That the loss of the soul is the loss of losses.

1. There is no undoing loss but this loss: a man is not undone that loseth his preferments, riches, liberty, life, but he that loseth his soul: when death sends the body

to the grave, and the soul to Hell, then a man is undone, and never till then, though like Job he lose all, and be driven from a Palace to lye on a dunghill.

2. Because *tis an universal loss, a loss of all that is good; other losses are but particular losses: if a man lose his soul, his body is lost with his soul; he loseth God, Christ, Glory, Heaven, and Blessedness: the loss of the soul is nothing else but a separation of the soul from God, from Christ, from Heaven: *pæna damni*, this punishment of loss is the worst part of damnation: the loss of God and of Christ, is more than the loss of our souls: in losing God, we lose an infinite good: our soul is more worth than a world; but God is worth more than thousands of millions of worlds. What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose God? What shall a man give in exchange for God, for Christ, for Heaven? were it only the loss of our souls, it were grievous; but it is the loss of our God also which makes it an inexpressible loss.

3. It is an irrecoverable loss: other losses may be made up again: A man may lose his goods, children, health, and make them up again, as Job did, who recovered all

all his losses: he was richer in goods, had a numerous issue: he had all what he lost by *Caldeans, Sabeans*, wind, fire and Devils, made up again: but a lost soul can never be recovered again, *nec prece nec pretio*; once cast into Hell, and for ever cast into Hell. What the Psalmist saith of life, is as true of the soul. *Psal. 49. 7. None of them can by any means redeem his Brother, nor give God a ransom for him: the redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.* The very Heathen could say, *ab inferis nulla redemptio*, from Hell there is no redemption. Some have lost their lives, and Christ hath restored them again; but never did he, never will he restore a lost soul; he dyed once, and he will dye no more to save souls; he must be crucified again to save a damned soul. *Bellarmin* speaks truth in saying, That desperation is part of the torments of the damned, to be in Hell torments without the least hopes of redemption.

4. There is no gain equivalent to repair the loss of the soul: we may lose other things, yet gain something that may be equivalent to what we have lost: Gods providence makes up the loss of goods with the gain of grace, which is equivalent;

yea,

yea, of far more value than the goods of the world: we may lose our lives; God makes up the loss of life it self, with life eternal; yea, God hath promised to repair our losses an hundred-fold. *Mark 10. 29, 30. Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Children, or Lands, for my sake and the Gospel, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this life, and in the world to come life eternal.* Grace, comfort, assurance of Gods favour, is an hundred-fold better than all this worlds goods, and eternal life is a thousand-fold better than the whole world; but if we lose our souls, there is no gain to be had equivalent to our souls: *What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? that is, What thing is there that is equivalent to a soul? What are all the treasures in the world to our souls? yea millions of worlds are a most disproportionable recompence to a lost soul.*

5. Because the loss of our souls is not a bare privation, and loss of it which is no other than annihilation, turning the soul into nothing: it were happy for men, if their souls might cease to be when they are lost: no Being is better than a miserable Being:

Being : it were an happiness if Rocks and Mountains could crush the wicked, that they should never be again : it were well for Atheists that it were according to their thoughts, that there were no God, no Heaven, no Hell ; but the loss of their souls is the damnation of their souls to Hell ; it is Gods adjudging our souls to burn in flames of fire ; every lost soul findeth Hell ; men gain the place of torment by the loss of their souls : the soul of the rich glutton is in Hell torments ; the Devils lost Heaven, and gained Hell ; when men lose their souls, they lose God, and enjoy Devils ; they lose Heaven, and gain Hell : they lose joy and happiness, and gain inexpressible and unsupportable torments.

6. 'Tis an eternal loss : eternity makes it to be the loss of losses ; were it but for a time, were it but for a thousand years, as *Origen* fondly and impiously held ; this length of time would make the loss of souls great and considerable. Could a man be assured, that he should for some scores of years endure the terrible pains of the Stone and Gout, with any tormenting disease, it would make his stout spirit shrink and quake ; but now eternity makes an evil infinite : the loss of a soul being eternal,
makes

makes the loss infinite: eternal duration of torments, is the Hell of Hells. Were it possible to us to hear what yellings and howlings a damned lost soul makes, you might hear these sad complaints: Oh when shall I be delivered? what never! Must I be tormented as I am for ever? Oh that I had never been born! Oh that God would make my soul cease to be! Oh that I might not be at all! I would give all the world, had I it, not that I might be happy, but that I might not be at all: but wretched creature that I am, I must for ever burn in Hell: this word *for ever*, and *for ever*, tormenteth the soul as much as the fire doth; it gnaweth the conscience as cruelly as the worm doth. *Nulla major ac peior mors, quam ibi non moritur mors*: no death is more terrible than an ever-living death, saith St. Augustine.

Serm. 8.

Serm. 8. Preached Decemb. 22. 1661.

CHAP. X.

SECT. I.

BEfore I make Application, I will lay down this Inference or Corollary; hence we may infer, That our souls are immortal; otherwise there were no force in our Saviours arguments, encouraging us to self-denial, and losing of life, and despising the gains and profits of the world: for if our souls were corruptible, like the souls of Beasts, then let us seek our selves, throw away the Cross, let us save this present life, and let us gain the world, and never matter our souls no more than do the Beasts that perish: What necessity is there of professing any Religion, of being holy? let us rather take up this resolution, and put it in practice, let us eat, and drink, and play, for to morrow we shall dye; let us buy and sell, and get gain, and heap up treasure *per fas & nefas*; let us live merrily, and when we dye there is an end of us.

Therefore

Therefore our Saviour, to dash these impious resolutions, and to make us willing to lose all, to leave all, to suffer all things, to despise the world, tells us of saving life by losing it. (1.) Of gaining eternal life by losing a temporal life; therefore the soul must needs live after its departure from the body; and that the gain of the whole world is nothing to the loss of our souls; therefore the soul must abide for ever in weal or woe; for if our souls live not alwayes, there were no losing of them. I will therefore by some Arguments from Scripture, and by other Arguments, prove the immortality of the soul. Some deny the immortality of it; and the generality of men live as practical Mortalists, as if their souls were mortal; and did we firmly believe the immortality of our souls, men would have greater care, and give more diligence to save their souls, than they do; men would prize their souls above a thousand worlds of mortal and perishing treasures; but alas few believe it!

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SECT. 2.

SECT. 2.

THe first Argument is in *Mat. 10. 28.*
Fear not them which kill the body, but
are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear
him which is able to destroy both body and
soul in Hell: Here is the power of man,
 and the dreadful power of God: men have
 power to kill your bodies, but not your
 souls: but God hath power to destroy both
 soul and body in Hell everlastingly: the
 soul is therefore immortal, for otherwise
 God would not destroy it in Hell; if the
 soul were mortal, then man by killing
 the body, kills the soul also: Hence it is
 that Christ forbids us to fear men, they can
 but kill the body: it is the utmost mischief
 that the most powerful Persecutor can do,
 and it is no more than a disease or old age
 will in time do: this killing of the body is
 an inconsiderable mischief; it ought to be
 the contempt, and not the fear of noble
 believers: the everlasting destruction of
 the soul in Hell, is the evil we should fear:
 fear God therefore who only hath power
 over our souls and bodies to destroy them
 for ever. *St. Austin* from those words
 perswades all Christians to be of an un-
 daunted

daunted spirit, and not to deny Christ for fear of men. *Ecce quem times, & sub cuius comminationibus expallescis?* Behold, whom dost thou fear? at whose threatnings dost thou wax pale? Mans cruelty extends but to thy body, *usque ad corpus sedit;* *noli sevire in animam tuam*, be not cruel to thy own soul by a slavish fear of men; and casting off the fear of Almighty God.

God glorieth in this title, that he is the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; and Christ in his confutation of the Sadduces (who denied the Resurrection, and that there are Angels and Spirits) thus inferreth from this title, *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. What then is the Inference, but that *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, are now living? though not in their bodies, yet their souls are now alive; if they were not living, he is not the God of them: for in that he is said to be their God, it is grounded upon their existence: if God be for ever the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, their souls have an everlasting communion with him.

Consider what the Scripture speaks of the souls of good and bad men after death.

L. 2

1. That

1. That the souls of the godly are present with the Lord. *2 Cor. 5. 6.*

2. That they are with Christ. *Phil. 1. 23. I desire to depart and to be with Christ.*

3. The spirits of just men are made perfect in Heaven. *Heb. 12. 25.*

4. Why doth Stephen pray, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit? Act. 7. 59.*

5. 'Tis said of *Lazarus*, that after death he was in *Abraham's* bosome, and the rich glutton was in Hell torments, which is understood of their souls. *Luk. 16. 22, 23.*

6. The penitent Thief was said to be with Christ in Paradise, *Luk. 23. 43.* More places may be brought, but these may suffice any that believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God.

Arg. 4.

What mean all the promises of eternal life, of an incorruptible Kingdom? What mean all the threatnings of eternal death, of everlasting destruction, of unquenchable fire, of never-dying worms, if our souls were not immortal, and so capable of eternal rewards and punishments? I could bring Reasons from the souls simplicity, without composition; from the souls independency upon the body, as to her operations: from Gods power, who can as well preserve the soul to eternity, as pre-

serve

serve it in its Being for a day : yea, see how God preserves your souls in your bodies for your time of life in this world, 'tis as easie for God to preserve your souls to eternity, as for an hour ; but I will pass by these Reasons, and only instance in Reasons of our experience, which abundantly prove the immortality of the soul.

SECT. 3.

Consider how greatly some godly men Reas. 1. have desired, how willingly they have embraced death : I desire to be dissolved, saith St. Paul, *Egrederi anima, egredere anima*, go forth my soul, go forth my soul, saith Hilarion : *Volemus in caelum, voleremus in caelum*, let us fly to Heaven, let us fly up into Heaven, was the out-cry of Monica the Mother of *Austin* : how have the Martyrs kissed the stake ! Welcome life, said one to his stake : in the dayes of the Roman Pagan Persecutors, Christians would voluntarily run and suffer Martyrdom with condemned Martyrs : Crowns are given to day, and I will go and receive one, said a Christian woman, hearing of some going to suffer Martyrdom, and she ran and suffered with them : how have some

Martyrs called their day of death their wedding day? The Apostle tells us, that some have not accepted of deliverance, but preferred to dye before life. *Heb. 11. 35.* A Martyr going to the stake, being advised by one to have a care of his soul, answered him, so I have; *therefore I give my body to be burnt, that my soul may be saved.* Now, whence proceed these fervent desires of death, and triumphant joys in death, with the contempt of death, but from a full assurance and perswasion of the immortality of their souls; and that they should go from the flames of Martyrdom to refresh themselves in the Rivers of pleasures, which are at Gods right hand for evermore?

2. Consider the devotion and fearfulness of some wicked men lying on their deathbeds, and being ready to expire.

1. Let us consider whence their devotion cometh at that time: look on them in time of health, they drink and laugh away all fears and cares from their hearts: they neither pray, nor read, nor bewail the wickedness of their lives; they have Religion and religious duties in contempt, and make a scorn of holiness; but when sickness seizeth on them, and dreadful apprehensions

hension

visions of death catch hold of them, then they will pray; then they bewail the wickedness of their past life; then they will desire the prayers of those whom they had in daily derision; and will wish they had come as they, and had hearkened to the voice of their Teachers. Solomon describes their penitence. *Prov. 5. 12, 13, 14* *Thou wilt mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say: How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my Teachers, nor inclined mine ears to them that instructed me? Whence proceeds this devotion and repentance of dying wicked men? doth it not come from this impress of the soul's immortality which is on them, and from their serious apprehension, that after death the souls of men shall be carried to Abraham's bosom of joy, or into the unquenchable fire, and endless torments of Hell? What necessity is there they should make such ado, if their souls were mortal, and death be a destruction of their bodies, and an annihilation of their souls?*

2. Consider not only the devotion of some; but also the fear, and horrour, and despair of some wicked men on their deathbeds: in the time of health, they say there

is no God, no Heaven, no Hell: they mock and laugh at all these dreadful doctrines of Death, Hell, Judgement, Damnation, and Salvation, as if they were but meer humane inventions, preached in policy to keep fools in awe. Albeit there are some that live and dye in this gross Atheism, yet some of them have been filled with horreur and terror, one crying out, Oh that I were a Toad between two walls, so I might but live and not dye! Another cries out, Oh that I had never been born! *Spiras* cries out, Oh that I were above God! You shall see the horreur of their hearts in the shivering of their bodies: whence cometh this horreur, but from their apprehension of the souls immortality, and they are lost, or they are in doubts, whether they shall be damned or saved: as that Emperour dying cryed out, *Quo vadis animula vagula blandula?* Whither art thou going O my poor soul? Oh that this perswasion of our souls immortality were deeply rooted in us then I think we should be more fearful of the loss of the soul, and more endeavour to gain our souls.

CHAP. XI.

LET us who mind our souls, and know the invaluable preciousness of a soul, take up a sad lamentation, and weep (if we could) rivers of tears, considering how many live as if they had no souls to take care of, as if they had only a belly to feed, and a back to cloath, and children to provide portions for, and have no care what will become of their souls. *Socrates* wondered, beholding men to take care of making Statutes of Stone to appear like men; and that men themselves lived as if they were stocks and stones: So may we wonder to see men adorn their carkasses, and yet take no care for their souls; as if they were stinking carkasses, not worth our thoughts or care. Oh how do many men lose their souls for nothing, for meer toys and trifles! as it is in the Parable of the Wedding-Feast: One would not come because of a Farm; another because of a yoke of Oxen; a third because of his new-married Wife: So in the world, some cannot look after the salvation of their souls, because of drunkenness, others because of covetousness, and others because of uncleanness; some

Use 1.

N. B.

some cannot for this lust, some for that, all for one lust or other : Oh it is sad and lamentable that there are more souls damned than saved, and that Hell should have so many precious souls !

CHAP. XII.

SECT. I.

use 1.

THe second Use shall be of admonition to profane persons, and to the worldlings.

1. To profane wicked persons : lose not your invaluable souls for a base lust : St. Paul saith, *For meat destroy not the work of God*, Rom. 14. 15. let none of us for a lust destroy our souls, the choycest of Gods works : destroy it not for drunkenness, for swearing, for uncleanness : our hearts would dissolve into tears, did we seriously consider how many men hazard their immortal souls for the love and satisfaction of some lust or other, by which many do not gain the world, but lose the very gains of the world, in satisfying some damning lusts : swearers gain nothing by their oaths, yet lose their souls : Drun-

kards

hards lose their gain, and their souls also : many lusts there are which consume mens estates , and bring everlasting destruction on their souls.

To bring arguments to perswade you to hate, mortifie, and forsake your lusts, seemeth needless, if the fear of the loss of your pretious souls cannot perswade you, which is the sure and inevitable wages of sin, of every lust : yet I will use some arguments, as an Archer will shoot many arrows, not knowing which of them shall hit the mark.

I. Consider, Your lusts are they which *war against your souls*, 1 Pet. 2. 11. no enemy more seeks the destruction, and thirsteth after the blood of his enemy, than your lusts do the ruine and destruction of your souls. Did ever man destroy his own life for the love of his enemies? No, it is a pleasure to him to behold a thousand of them lie at his feet wallowing in their hearts blood : surely then it is the height of madness, when a man will damn his soul for the love of a lust, the greatest enemy our souls have : our lusts are worse enemies then the Devils are ; they could not mischief our souls, were it not for our lusts within : your lusts please you, therefore

fore you love them : the more they please, the more dangerous enemies are they to our souls : let men beware most, when lust like *Isaiah*, presents us with Butter and Milk in a Lordly dish.

2. Your lusts pollute and defile your souls, and do put your souls into an utter incapacity of salvation, and fit the soul for destruction. No unclean thing shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; no unclean soul shall be saved : Hell is the proper place and receptacle of unclean spirits; the very Devils shall as soon enter into heaven as an unclean soul : your souls must be washed in the blood of Christ, and bathed in the laver of regeneration, before they can enter into heaven.

3. Your souls cannot but be lost, if you love any lust; for God cannot but abhor and hate your souls wallowing in filthy lusts : God cannot delight in you, will not shew you any redeeming and saving mercy; they are your lusts that make the Almighty God, the severe Judge of all souls to be an enemy to you; if God be an enemy, thy soul cannot escape the damnation of Hell.

4. Oh think with your selves, that it is a most hainous provocation in the sight of
God

God to see men prefer a lust (which is worse then nothing) above their souls, which in themselves are more worth then a world, and in Christs account more worth then a world. Oh that we could but seriously think, how angry God and Christ is, to see men value a lust above a soul for which Christ died; this is trampling under foot the blood of Christ, and the blood of our souls also. Did not Christ prefer thy soul above his own life? Wilt thou prefer a lust above him? Did not Christ die for thy soul? Wilt thou destroy the soul for which Christ died? If your souls were ten thousand times more precious then they are, yet they perish deservedly, who for lusts will destroy them: This is the cause why the loss of the soul is everlasting, because men do prefer a base momentary lust above God infinitely good, above Christ an infinite Saviour: they forsake an eternal God for a temporal and external good: therefore their punishment shall be eternal: God will judge men to punishment apporportioned to the offence.

S E C T.

SECT. 2.

2. **T**his may serve as an admonition to worldly men : you have before your eyes the gain of the world, the loss of your souls : O beware of setting thy heart on gain, lest thou lose thy precious soul : do not for a little money, for preferment, pleasure and ease, destroy thy immortal soul ! Oh do not make so precious a creature as thy soul is, subordinate to any worldly gain whatsoever : your gain will be inconsiderable, but the loss of your soul is unconceivable. The preciousness and immortality of our souls, and the fading transitory nature of all worldly things, should (methinks) be a most prevailing argument to take off our affections from worldly gain, and quicken them to work out the salvation of our souls. Worldly gain is the great hinderance of salvation ; it is difficult for all and any to be saved : but saith the Scripture, *How hard is it for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ? it is as possible for a Camel to go through a Needles eye* nothing but Gods Omnipotency can carry a man through this difficulty to heaven.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

I Will now shew in some particulars what an hinderance the gain of this world is to the saving of our souls: when the hearts of men are passionately set upon gain, and their thoughts are raised up to an high admiration of it, and they are carried out into an eager pursuit after the world, then is their soul in danger of being lost. I desire such persons sadly to consider these particulars.

1. The gain of the world makes men very slaves to many lusts, 1 Tim. 6. 9. *They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction.* He that will be rich,] that is, that man that sets his mind and affections on the world, *he falls into temptation*, namely of the Devil, who tempts him to many sordid and unjust practises to get gain: *And into a snare*, namely of the Devil, who intangleth him in the world, *as a Bird in a snare: he falls into divers foolish and hurtful lusts*: namely of lying, cheating, dissembling, pride, oppression, what lust soever makes for his advantage.

advantage, which drown men in perdition and destruction; the word is ^{Booke} sinks them to the bottom of destruction; the greater gain, the greater damnation of the soul.

2 It is exceeding injurious to God; for worldly men do set up gain in the room of God: covetousness is therefore called Idolatry by the Apostle; yea, it sets God and man at enmity: What hope of salvation when God is an enemy to thee? it devours all thoughts of God, all love of him, *Psalm 10. 4.* God is not in all the worldlings thoughts: he never thinks on God, Christ, heaven, salvation, but all his thoughts are on his profits; the worldling sleeps with him, goes to meals with him, at bed and board, and goes to Church with him.

3. Worldly gain makes men to slight, neglect, and despise the dayes of salvation, means of salvation, and saving duties: when will the Sabbath be over? cries the worldling; he inveigheth that God hath one day in seven: as for prayer, and Preaching he matters them not, looking on them as unprofitable things: what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? saith the worldling; how can that man be

be saved; that despiseth the day of grace and means of salvation, that never regards any duties tending to the saving of his soul?

4. It is worldly gain that choaks the seed of the word which is able to save your souls: as Christ whipt out of the Temple the buyers and sellers, so the world comes in and casts out all saving counsel of the word; yea when the word comes in a convincing way, the world choaks all those convictions; and when the word of God stirs up any good resolutions in the soul, the world choaks them, and makes men break through all, and all this is to the utter undoing of the pretious souls; choak the word, and you choak your souls; choak the word, and you choak your consciences.

5. This worlds gain makes men to professe religion according as it makes for their advantages: if religion be in credit, they will professe it; if religion be opposed, they will persecute it: he that makes gain to be Godlinesse, will be goldly and ungodly as his gain requireth: as the Samaritans would be Jews, when it went well with the Jews; and when the Jews were down, then the Samaritans helped

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to

to down with them; how will God shortly avenge himself on such souls?

N. B.

6. No lust more unsatiable then the desire of worldly gain; tis alwayes increasing even in old age; when men should think on the world to come, yet then are earth-worms too mindful of this world. There is a tale of a country man that sat down on a rivers bank, till the river should run all away, but the river ran still: such are the greedy desires of gain: our hearts think, if we had so much, we would be content; but when we have it, our desires like the river, do still run after the things of this life so vehemently, that men cannot and do not desire after salvation. Oh therefore if thy soul be pretious in thy esteem, as it is in it self, set thy heart upon the gaining of thy soul, and not on the worlds gain: withdraw thine affection from the things of the world, look on them as dross and dung, as hinderances to thy salvation: Oh that the men of the world did but remember that they have immortal souls to be saved or lost: thus as a certain Minister wrote upon his book-tables, walls, *Pretium sanguinis*, *pretium sanguinis*, the price of blood, the price of blood; so I wish that worldly men would

writ

write on their shops, counting houses, tables, doors, bags, Have a care of the soul; of the soul that must shortly be either in eternal joyes, or in everlasting misery.

Serm. 9. Preached Decemb. 29. 1661.

CHAP. XIV.

An Use of Exhortation.

SECT. 1.

ARE our souls more worth then a world of created good things? is no profit like the salvation of our souls? we should then be exhorted, to set our affections, cares, and greatest labours to gain our souls, to work out our salvation: let other things stand without and below our thoughts and cares, till we have in some good degree made provision for the salvation of our souls.

Let me speak to rich and poor, for your souls are both alike pretious: the soul of the meanest beggar is as pretious as the

soul of the greatest Potentate : oh that all sorts of men did but study and know the invaluable worth of their souls ; What everlasting glory, what eternal comfort are prepared for our souls if they be saved ; and what intolerable wrath is prepared for them, if we lose them !

1. You Rich men, who have some share in this worlds profit, whose riches perhaps are still increasing, and you are still in pursuit of more worldly things : be ye exhorted to seek with all care and diligence to gain your souls ; add to the profits of this world the immortal profits of heaven ; add to your pretious substance pretious faith ; add grace to your gold and silver : in so doing you will have treasures in heaven, as ye have on earth ; good things here, and good things in the world to come ; an heaven in earth, and an heaven in heaven : That is the blessed man that is rich in money, and rich in grace ; rich in this world, and rich in the world to come : so is every rich godly man ; otherwise it will be an heart-cutting speech to hear Christ say : Son, remember thou hast had thy good things in this life ; there is no profit for thee in Heaven.

2. You

2. You that are poor men, perhaps you labour hard, but gain little or no profit by the labour of your hands: oh that you would be exhorted to trade for your souls, and labour and work out your own salvation! what if you be poor, yet if you be rich in faith, you shall be rich enough in heaven; if you cannot lay up treasures on earth, lay up treasure in heaven; seeing you cannot provide for your backs and bellies as you would, yet provide for your souls; if your souls be provided for, ye have enough, ye are rich enough; ye are heirs of a Kingdom, though ye be not worth a foot of land on earth; otherwise, if you will be carelesse of your souls, as too many poor people are, alas you are miserable now, and you shall be miserable hereafter: you want all things in this world, and you shall want God, Christ, heaven and happinesse in the world to come; poor wicked men have an hell here, and an hell in hell.

SECT. 2.

THat both poor and rich may be quickened up to work out the salvation of their souls, let us weigh these particulars.

I. Every one of us is for gain and profit: we all cry as he in the *Comedy*, *Rem, quocumq; modo rem*, let me have gain, gain, in any manner, and by any means gain. Our Saviour here sheweth us what is the best gain, the surest gain, that will everlastingly enrich us, *viz.* the saving of our souls; no gain like it, and there is no gain but that: the profits of this world are but seeming imaginary gain; not real and solid gain, but real losse: seeing then we labour and toyl for gain, let us labour for this gain which is everlasting, that will stay with us when all worldly gain shall come to nothing.

II. Consider what helps and advantages God hath graciously given us for the winning of our souls, which he hath denied to thousands of people in the world, whose souls are as pretious as ours, immortal and as capable of grace and glory as ours, and yet want these helps and advantages

ages which we have for the salvation of our souls.

1. We have a day of salvation to work out, which they have not : they have a day of patience, but not a day of grace and salvation as we have.

2. We have Sabbath dayes which are the Mercat-dayes, on which we may buy without money all necessary provision for our souls : *The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath* ; it was made for the soul, the chiefest part of man ; that a man might have one entire day to work for the profit of his soul : 'Tis a lamentation to consider how many stand idle in the Mercat all the day long, and slight and profane this Mercat-day.

3. God hath provided for us pretious ordinances, which are the means of salvation, *the wells of salvation*, as the Prophet calls them, out of which our souls may draw and drink salvation ; they are as *Jacob's* ladder, by which Christ descendeth from heaven to our souls : we ascend to heaven where Christ is ; by prayer, we send to heaven for salvation : by hearing the word, we hear from heaven the things of salvation ; the Sacraments are seals sealing salvation to believing souls : hence the

Apostle frequently in the Epistle to the Hebrews calleth ordinances *τὰ ἐνέγραφα*, heavenly things.

4. We have Ministers whose duty is to watch over our souls, whose work and crown is to convert our souls: they are to study, pray, preach, write, and labour and sweat for the salvation of our souls, who are earthly Angels to convey our souls to Christ, and so to salvation, as the heavenly Angels shall convey them from our bodies to heaven: oh how many thousands of pretious souls do want such Instruments of salvation!

III. Consider that the work of salvation is not so full of toyl and labour, and vexation of mind and body, as the labouring to win the profits of the world is: how full are their heads of cares, their hands of work, who labour to gain the world! now the working out of our salvation in it self considered, is easie, sweet, full of delight; it is only the corruption of our hearts makes it tedious and burdensome: what sweetnesse the souls of believers do find, that others may find, would they give up themselves to the work, to praying, hearing the word, meditating on God, Christ, and heaven, to believing,

to mortifying their lusts; there is no vanity nor vexation of spirit in these exercises, they are sweeter then the honeycomb: they are our carnal lusts that make us to disrelish these things as bitter: consider with your selves, there is no drudgery nor toyl in praying continually for salvation, in attending on the Ministry of the word of salvation in season and out of season.

IV. Consider what offers of Salvation God makes to us, which he denieth to thousands of pretious souls in the world: we need not compass Sea and Land for our Souls, as Merchants do to win the profits of the world: we need not travel from East to West, from North to South for Salvation: But as Christ to *Zachens*, *This day Salvation is come to thy house*: So Salvation is this time and that time offered to us, and cometh to our houses; Very observable is that of the Apostle, Rom. 10. 6, 7, 8. *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven, to fetch from thence to us that will of God concerning our souls salvation! this is a deniall that Christ came from Heaven: neither say, who shall descend into the deep of Hell, to bring us knowledge how our souls may be redeemed from Hell: because the word* of

of Salvation is nigh thee, it is in thy mouth, it is in thine ear : oh therefore, how shall we escape if we neglect Salvation thus offered !

V. Consider how God is ready and hath promised to bless the means of Salvation to them that shall diligently make use thereof : he is ready to work in us both to will and to do ; he is ready to give faith, repentance, grace, every thing that is instrumental and preparative to the Salvation of our Souls. God, Christ, and the Holy-Ghost will be co-workers with us, if we will put our hands to this plough ; never did any man diligently attend the work of the Salvation of his Soul, but he found God blessing the labour of his hands to him ; never did any seek him in vain, never did any come to Christ, and was rejected.

VI. Consider at what easie rate we may purchase Salvation ; if the soul be lost, then nothing can be given in exchange for the soul : but now God requires us to give away our lusts in exchange for the salvation of our souls : sell all thy lusts and give them away, and thou shalt have salvation : can there be an easier and cheaper price given for salvation ? who will not give in exchange pebbles for diamonds,
dirt

dirt and dung for gold ? he that purchaseth gold by letting go dung, he purchaseth gold at an easie rate : this easie and low price God expecteth we should give for the saving our souls : let go thy lusts, thy soul shall be saved : the best thing we can part with, is but our moral righteousness, which is but dung and drosse ; part with it, here is Christ and salvation : let us be judges how deservedly do men eternally perish, who will not give their sins away in exchange for their souls ; and too many such there are in the world.

CHAP. XV.

Another Use of Exhortation.

IS the soul so pretious, and the losse of it eternally pernicious ? then let us all be exhorted to spend more time and labour for the saving our souls : think no time lost, nor labour that is bestowed in gaining this immortal commodity : time is never better spent then in the work of salvation ; oh methinks the souls immortality should quicken us us to give all diligence and to spend most of our time to the saving of it.
The

The soul is made for eternity, and shall abide in blessednesse or misery, when all the profits of the world shall be mouldred into nothing : canst thou then think that any labour, care, cost, time, is too much that is employed about it ? That speech of the Rabbin to his Scholars, shall be mine to you : *Opus multum, tempus breve, operarii pigri, pater familias urget.* We have much work to do, the time is short ; we are slothful workers, our Master calleth earnestly upon us. I will speak to these four particulars.

1. Salvation of our souls is a great work : *the righteous shall scarcely be saved* : it is a work of great difficulty, not an easie work : therefore we are commanded to strive, to give diligence, to offer violence to the Kingdom of heaven : it is not empty wishes, and lazy velleities and slegish desires that will make a man rich in goods, or a Christian rich in grace. There is much praying, much hearing, meditation, humiliation, examination, much mortification, much striving with our hearts, against our lusts, devils, the world ; a forsaking of all sin, yea an universal obedience to all Gods commands before we can be saved : a few duties will not do the
work,

work, nor diligence for a fit, nor leaving a few sins, but we must serve God in righteousness and holiness all the dayes of our lives: we must pray continually, we must persevere to the end in all good, if we will be saved; therefore much time is required for this work.

2. As the work we have to do is great and much, so the time allotted us for this work of salvation is very short; we have but as it were a day to work for eternity. Our time is not only short, but swift; how do every one of us hasten to our graves and eternal states? 'tis not only short and swift, but uncertain; we know not the day nor the hour when our souls shall be required: it may be this night, it may be this week; our times are known only to God. *Tecum cogita, cum exas potes non redire; cum redeas potes non exire*, said Seneca. Oh therefore, what necessity is laid upon us to redeem time, as the Apostle exhorts us, to redeem it from our labours, pleasures, profits and sleep, to spend it in working out the salvation of our souls! But oh how do the generality of men take away time from the soul, to employ it in getting gain! many there are who grudge their souls one day in a week, one hour in

in a day, and bestow more time and labour in one year on the profits of the world, then they do all their life long in soul-work ! how many put off this work till they have but few hours to live, and not any bodily strength to do the least work of salvation !

3. Consider what slow work-men we are in this great work of salvation of our souls : our hearts are naturally sluggish, yea naturally opposite to our own happiness, and to the means tending to obtain it : the most holy man is too slothful in this great work ; the best men have much ado to keep their hearts in holy diligence in the work of saving their souls : when they find their spirits most willing, they alwayes find the flesh very weak and backward, so that they cannot do the things they would, *Gal. 5. 17.* therefore we had need to take as much time as we can, to bestow on the winning of our souls.

4. Consider how God doth earnestly call upon us to work out our salvation, to give diligence to make our calling to salvation sure to us : *work while it is day* saith Christ, *the night is coming, when no man can work. To day, while it is called to day, harden not your hearts,* saith the Holy

Holy Ghost, *Now is the time, now is the day of salvation.* God would not have us to delay till the next minute; but even while it is called *Now*, we should work out our salvation: never did any Master call upon his servants more earnestly to do any thing, than God calls upon us to save our souls. The *Rabbin* said, *Nemo est cui non sit hora.* Every man hath his hour: he who overslips it, may never meet with the like hour again. Oh therefore begin this work now without delay: we all resolve to bestow some time on our souls; why not *this now*? we are sure of this time, we are not certain of to morrow; by to morrow this time thou maist be in thy grave, or in hell. At death we will desire longer time for our souls; tis just with God to deny it then, because we neglect and mispend our present time. When *Apelles* was asked, why he was so long and accurate in drawing a picture, he answered *Aeternitati pingo*, I paint to Eternity. What need have we to be long and accurate in soul-work, for we work to eternity! we must pray much, for we pray to eternity; we must hear and meditate much, we hear and meditate to eternity; we must be very accurate in our conversations, for we walk

walk to eternity; our immortal souls must be in weal or woe to eternity.

CHAP. XVI.

An Use of Exhortation.

IT should learn us all in perillous times of the Church, to take more care of securing our souls before all things whatsoever; let not the fear of losing our estates, liberties, lives, make us expose our souls to losing or saving them. Keep thy soul with all diligence, *Prov 4.23.* if soul or estate must go, keep thy soul with all diligence, let estate go: if thy soul or relations, if thy soul or honours, if thy soul or life must go, be sure to keep thy soul, secure that from losing; let all things go, how precious soever and dear they are to thee, yet let them go: save the Jewel, whatever becometh of the Cabiner; oh save this peerless Jewel, thine immortal soul, whatsoever becomes of thy name, goods, lands, livings, wife, children, body, life and all. If your houses be on fire, you will strive to save your selves, your children, your plate, your money, your evidences, let the
lumber

number be burnt : if the conscience doth
not suffer shipwrack, is is no matter if the
ship be split. *Joseph my son is yet alive,*
is enough, said *Jacob* : my soul is safe, my
conscience is preserved, it is enough ; I
have enough, may a Christian say in his
greatest losses for Christ and his Go-
spel.

There is great reason why we should
specially look to the salvation of our
souls.

1. Because if we save the soul, we save
all from being lost ; and if the soul be lost
all is lost, and we are undone for ever
and ever ; if the soul be saved, we shall
have a good God, a good Saviour, a good
Kingdom, we shall have those immense
measures of Goodness which God hath
prepared in Heaven ; but if the soul be
lost, we lose a good God, and a good
Kingdom.

2. Because there are things to be given
in exchange for other things we lose ; but
if the soul be lost, what shall we give in
exchange for our souls ? God can, God
will repair all our losses for Christ an hun-
dred fold : he will give you grace, com-
fort, support, in exchange for your lost
state ; he will give you in exchange for

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your lost Lands and Livings the Kingdom of Heaven : he will give you himself in exchange for your lost relations ; he will be better to you than an hundred Fathers, Mothers, Brothers, Sisters, Children. When *Hannah* was mourning for a Son, *Elkanah* said to her, *Am not I better to thee than ten Sons?* 1 Sam. i. Is not God better to us than ten thousands of relations ? Yea, thy very soul saith to thee, Oh save me, save me, for my salvation is better than the salvation of ten thousands of Lands and Livings ; yea, than ten thousands of mortal lives !

CHAP. XVII.

SECT. I.

IS the salvation of souls the best gain, and the loss of souls the saddest loss ; hence let us be exhorted to take compassion of the souls of others, to use our best endeavours in our stations to promote the salvation of the souls of others : let Husbands and Wives promote the salvation of one anothers souls. God, Christ, Angels, do take pity on our souls, let us also

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pity them: *He that winneth souls, is wise,*
saith Solomon. Prov. 7. 11. *They that turn*
souls to righteousness, shall shine like Stars
for ever and ever. Dan. 12. 3. Yea, that
man that pitieth his own soul, will pity the
souls of others; he that endeavours his
own salvation, will promote the salvation
of others; he that is afraid of the fire of
Hell, will, as Sr. Jude saith, pull others
out of the fire: Men have not compassion
of the souls of others, that are regardless
of their own souls: he that considereth
what the loss of a soul is, cannot but do
what he can to save souls. Oh therefore
let us be perswaded to pray for one ano-
thers souls conversion and salvation: let us
counsel one another to save one anothers
souls: let us reprove one another, that we
may save one anothers souls; let us pro-
voke one another to holiness: let us exhort
one another; Come, let us go unto the
house of the Lord, he will teach us the way
to salvation: If this be our duty, where
then shall those men appear, that promote
one anothers souls damnation, by evil
counsels, by evil examples, by tempting
one another to sin, by encouraging one
another in evil, by keeping vain and evil
company! how will these men curse one

another in Hell, and cry to God for vengeance upon one anothers soul ! he was the cause of my damnation, saith the other, Oh the Devils come and torment him !

SECT. 2.

LEt me now address my self both to Ministers and People.

1. Let Ministers be faithful and diligent in breaking the bread of life, in feeding people with the knowledge of the way to salvation; lay out your talents for the salvation of poor souls: preach in season, and out of season, that the souls of people may not be lost, Oh that many souls may bless God for you, and bless you also: ye have *curem animarum*, the cure of souls: it is a sin of the greatest magnitude to betray the souls of those committed to your charge; no murder like the murdering of souls; no blood cries louder to Heaven for vengeance, than the blood of precious souls: Ministers must give an account for their peoples souls: Oh how will the guilt of soul destroying flash whole Hells of fire into the faces of soul-murdering Ministers !

1. Of ignorant Ministers, that are blind guides, leading many blind souls into the pit of destruction: woe to the people that have an ignorant Minister placed over them: Ministers are called Seers and Watchmen: How can blind men watch over peoples souls?

2. Of prophane Ministers: Where will such Ministers appear, when God shall bring them to give an account of the souls of their flock, who destroy not only their own, but the souls of others by their wicked examples? How do drunken Ministers hearten the wicked in sin to their eternal destruction! woe to the flock when such prophane Ministers are set over them!

3. Of lazy Ministers: What will become of such Ministers, whose idleness starves the pretious souls committed to their charge! O ye Congregations, pray ye fervently, that you may have Pastors after Gods own heart.

II. Let me speak to the people, Attend ye on the Ministry of the Word, the power of God to the salvation of your souls: *Receive ye with meekness the ingrafted Word of God, which is able to save your souls:* if thy soul be pretious, thou wilt prize the

means of salvation: the reason why men despise the word of salvation, is because they despise their own souls.

SECT. 3.

WOE to such, who being put in mind of saving their souls, who are told again and again, that it is the *necessarium* of every man, who are forewarned of the damnation of Hell, who have the way of salvation made known to them, yet willingly and wilfully neglect their own souls, the day, the means of salvation; yea Christ himself the only Saviour of souls. The loss of any soul without the Church, is terrible: 'tis pity that such creatures, capable of eternal Blessedness, should be the subjects and objects of everlasting misery: but the loss of *our* souls will be more intolerable, than the loss of other souls. The Gospel of salvation which we have disobeyed; the grace and mercy of God offered to us, which we have slighted; all the Sermons we have heard, all the convictions, all the motions of the spirit; God and Christ as Redeemer and Saviour, and the Spirit of Sanctification; yea all Ordinances, Word and Sacraments, will aggravate the

the loss of our souls. No fire so fierce
as when Oyl, Wine or Vinegar is cast
on it: no Hell so hot, as that which the
grace of God, the love of a Saviour, Mer-
cy and Ordinances shall heat: it will be
far more tolerable for all other souls, than
for those that are lost under the means of
salvation.

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THE

THE
PARABLE
OF THE

Barren Figg-Tree

Opened, and faithfully
applied in seven Sermons

On *LUKE* 13. 6, 7, 8, 9.

By that Eminent and Learned Divine, Mr. *Thomas Byrdall*, *M. A.* late Minister of the Word, and Preacher at *Walsall*, in the County of *Stafford*.

L O N D O N,
Printed *Anno Dom.* 1666.



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The PARABLE of the Barren Figg-tree opened.

LUKE 13. 6, 7, 8, 9.

6. He spake also this Parable, A certain man had a Figg tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.
7. Then said he unto the Dresser of his Vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this Figg-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?
8. And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it.
9. And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Serm. 10. Preached 7th January 5. 1661.

CHAP. I.



HE word [*Also*] hints the occasion of our Saviours uttering this Parable: some of his hearers relating to Christ the punishment which God by the cruelty of *Pilate* had inflicted on the *Galileans*

Galileans; while they were killing and sacrificing Sheep and Oxen, *Pilate*, with his Souldiers, came upon them, and slew them: Our Saviour did not answer them according to their expectation; for they thought to hear what Christ thought, not of this bloody act of *Pilate*, but of the eternal state of the *Galileans*: But he takes occasion from this punishment, to warn them to repent. You think that these *Galileans* were greater sinners than others, therefore such a dreadful judgment came on them: They were great sinners, and their punishment just; but yet know, that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*: their sins brought this judgment on them; your sins will bring the like righteous judgments on you, if by timely repentance you make not your peace with God.

Our Saviour addeth another story of a dreadful judgment on eighteen men, upon whom the Tower in *Siloam* fell, and slew them; and concludes it in like manner, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. God hath in his treasury of vengeance the same and worse judgments for the like sinners: there remaineth nothing for impenitent persons, but a certain expectation of dreadful judgments to come upon them:

them: I will hence give you these Observations.

That lesser judgments are sometimes made publick examples of divine vengeance, and greater are not. *Obfer. 1.*

2. The dreadful judgments of God on others, ought to be Motives quickening and pressing every one of us to repent speedily. Such examples are written, and daily made to learn us to repent: Dost thou hear of, or see any heavy judgment on a drunkard, coming to a sudden and fearful end? repent of thy drunkenness, lest thou likewise perish! Dost thou hear of, or see wrath overtaking a notorious swearer? repent of thy oaths, lest thou likewise perish! Every judgment (on whomsoever it falleth) calleth loud upon every one of us to repent, lest we likewise perish: We must not be idle spectators of the Theatre of Gods judgments, nor rash censurers of them on whom his judgments fall, but be trembling Penitents. Thou art a sinner, perhaps a greater sinner than they are; God is angry with thee, as with them: God can, and may make thee an example of his judgment, as he doth others: if not, yet be sure, he will make every impenitent man the subject and object of his eternal vengeance:

vengeance; it is only divine patience and forbearance that with-holds judgment from falling upon every impenitent sinner in this world.

CHAP. II.

SECT. I.

THIS Parable, which (through Gods assistance) I purpose to handle, is spoken by our Saviour for this end, that he might shew how God expects fruit meet for repentance of every one at all times, upon all occasions: it is his long-sufferance that holds his **Axe** from cutting us down: if men living under the means and calls of repentance, shall despise his long sufferance, and walk in the hardness and impenitency of their hearts, and do not, and will not repent, then God will in his determinate time lay the **Axe** to the root of the trees, and cut them down; he will destroy all impenitent sinners, and cast them into unquenchable fire: this is the necessary drift of the Parable, other things mentioned in it are rather *ornamenta Parabole*, ornaments of the Parable; than necessities in it, as

Maldonat.
in loc.

Maldonat rightly observeth.

In the Parable there are these observable things.

1. Gods great favour to some, compared to Trees planted in a Vineyard.

2. His complaint of the abuse of this his special favour, threatening to destroy them.

3. His longer forbearance toward them, and continuance of the means of conversion among them a little longer.

4. His final determination in case men repent not.

I will now lay open the sense of the words of this Parable, and then lay before you the chief points contained in it.

A certain man.] that is, God; Christ condescending to the capacity of his bearers, compareth the great God to a man that is an owner of a Vineyard.

By *the Vineyard*, understand the Church in general; and every Congregation gathered together in the name of Christ, wherein the Means and Ordinances of salvation are dispensed: the Church is frequently compared to a Vineyard, as *Psal. 80. 8. Isa. 5. 1.*

1. Because all men delight in their Vineyards: so doth God in his Church: *here, saith the Lord, will I delight to dwell: it is Gods pleasant walk, I will walk in them.*

2. Because

2. Because a Vineyard is the rich possession of men: Kings delight in planting Vineyards: of old Vineyards were Kingsly possessions: so the Church is Gods portion, the lot of his inheritance; it is of his planting in the earth.

3. Because men bestow care and cost on Vineyards: so God bestows his costly things on the Church; all his care is for his Church: he no more regardeth Nations where he hath no Church, than men regard waste howling wildernesses.

4. Because in Vineyards men plant the choicest Trees, as Vines, or Figg-trees: it is an effect of special favour to such men whom God placeth in his Church under the means of salvation: all other men without the Church are as briars and thorns, and trees standing in a barren wilderness, fit for no use, but fuel for fire.

5. A Vineyard is profitable to men: so is the Church (as I may so speak) to God: he reaps no fruit from any parts of the world, but from his Church: from hence he gathereth Grapes and Figgs: here he hath the fruits of faith and holiness: in the Church only God is served.

SECT.

SECT. 2.

BY the Figg-tree, understand every particular man in the Church, enjoying the means of conversion and salvation: Every one of you is this Figg-tree planted in Gods Vineyard: to you is given the means of conversion and repentance, whereas thousands of men in the world stand like so many despised and rejected Trees in a barren Heath.

But why doth Christ compare men to Figg-Trees, more than to the Vine, or other Trees planted and growing in a Vineyard?

Either because in those Eastern hot Countries, as *Judea*, &c. no Trees were more common in Vineyards than Figg-trees: Or,

2. Because no Tree is more fruitful than it: it is usual in those Countries for Figg-trees to bring forth fruit sooner than other Trees, viz. the first year they are planted: and it is observed, that if it bring not forth fruit the second or third year, then there is no hope: conversion is usually wrought in the beginning of enjoying the preaching of the Gospel; conversion in old age is very rare: if men bring not forth fruit

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after

after the enjoyment of the word for some years, I dare not say that there is no hope, but there is but small hopes of them.

3. Because a Figg-tree is a sappy tree, and draws much moisture from the earth: Christians either are or should be more knowing, more holy then others: how can we be dry, seeing we are trees (as the Psalmist speaks) *planted by the rivers of waters*! Psal. 1. 3. that man is in a sad condition, who draws no sap from the ordinances, who remains as hard and as dry as rocks on the rivers side.

The fruit which God expecteth is repentance, conversion, faith, new obedience: if we plant a tree, we expect fruit from it; he that ploweth and soweth, ploweth and soweth in hope of gathering fruit: men go to see how their corn comes on, how their trees flourish: so God expects and waits to see our conversion: how long? when shall it once be? he cometh seeking fruit, and that for three years.

Quest.
Sol.

What is here meant by three years?

They who apply the Parable to the Jews, do understand by the first year the time of the promulgation of the law; by the second year, the preaching of the Prophets;

phets; by the third year Christs preaching to them, whilst he conversed with them.

Others understand it only of the three years wherein Christ preached to them, and confirmed his doctrine with glorious miracles; and do think that this Parable was spoken in the beginning of his fourth year.

They who apply it to all persons within the Church, understand by the three years, the threefold age of man, his youth, his manhood, and his old age: God comes to us in the dayes of our youth, seeking our repentance, but finds none; in the day of our middle age, and finds none; in the day of our old age, and finds none.

But letting pass these and other interpretations: we are to understand by three years all that space of time that we enjoy the means of grace, be it longer or shorter.

1. It is said three years: a definite time, put for an indefinite.

2. To note that God doth then expect from us repentance in a short time after we have been called upon to repent.

3. To note that the day of grace is not of a long continuance.

4. I like *Maldonat's* reason : three years are mentioned because of the nature of a figg-tree, which either will bring forth fruit at the third years end, or not at all : if men do not bring forth the fruit of repentance after some years enjoyment of the means of grace, it is to be feared, that they will never bring forth fruit. It is a sad observation that some Divines make from these words : that God usually converteth those that are converted within three years after he hath sent the powerful Ministry among them : but this is rather their severe opinion, then a solid doctrine.

SECT. 3.

Quest.
Resp.

WH O is meant by the *Vine-dresser* ? I will let pass many frivolous interpretations, and give the genuine sense : Christ is the supream Vine-dresser : he is appointed by God the Father to be *Cultor & custos Vineæ*, the keeper and dresser of his Vineyard the Church : he it is that is King, Head, and Judge, that hath the axe of judgement in his hand to cut down barren trees, and cast them into the fire : the subordinate Vine dressers are the Ministers

sters of the Word, whose whole labour Christ useth in dressing his Vineyard, in planting and watering the trees, in bringing men to repentance; hence they are called co-workers with God.

Now said he to the dresser of the Vineyard concerning the fruitless fig-tree,

Cut it down.

Here is a threatening of destruction; destroy all impenitent persons, clear my Vineyard of them, let neither root nor branch remain, but cast them into the fire.

Why cumbereth it the ground?

Unfruitful trees are burdens in a Vineyard: they take up the room of trees which (if planted in the Vineyard) would bring forth fruits of repentance: they spoil other trees, and make them to become barren. Naturalists observe, that the fig-tree draws all the moisture of the earth with it, to it self, and so spoileth other trees: thus wicked impenitent men are a burden to the Church, they spoil one another, and make one another barren in holiness, and fruitful in sin, and this is the sense of the word *καταρῆναι*, as Beza well
noteth.

*Onerat, sed
inutilis
onere.*

Now followeth the Vine-dressers intercession for this unfruitful fig-tree.

Beza.

Lord, let it alone this year also.

Here Christ mediateth for them : Lord, Yet shew more rich patience and forbearance : destroy it not presently, but wait one year more for its repentance.

Till I shall dig about it and dung it.

Here Christ condescendeth to mean capacities, by comparing the continuance of the means of grace and salvation, to digging and dunging : alluding to Vine-dressers and husbandmen, who dig and open the earth about the root of the tree, and dung it to make it to bear fruit. Thus Christ saith, that his Ministers shall use their best skill and labour to bring impenitent persons to repentance ; they shall still invite, exhort, persuade them to repent ; they shall lay promises and threatnings to them to provoke them to fruitfulness. Then we have God's and Christ's final determination concerning the barren fig tree.

If it bear fruit.

It is an abrupt and imperfect speech : therefore translators supply it with *but if it bear fruit*, it shall be well : there will be no cause then why it should be cut down : if men shall at last repent, it is well, they shall not be destroyed.

And if not : then after that thou shalt cut it down.

That is, if no skill, nor cost, nor labour can make it fruitful : if no means can bring men to repentance, if men go on in their wickedness after all means have been used ; then cut it down, damn and destroy them.

So then in this Parable, we see Gods mercy and severity contending about impenitent sinners : justice is enraged against them, and would destroy them, but mercy holds her hand, till triall be made to the full whether they will repent.

CHAP. III.

THIS very Parable is a Vineyard as full of useful instructions, as that is of clusters of grapes : I shall gather a basket full, and set them before you.

Where, and on whom God bestoweth the means of grace and of repentance ; there, and from them God expecteth answerable fruits : it is grounded on these words, *A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon.*

Obser. I.

Obser. 2. Where much fruit of righteousness is expected, there God oftentimes finds none, it is grounded on these words: *And he found none.*

Obser. 3. It is an astonishing wonder, that men who have great means of grace and repentance given them, yet repent not: it is grounded on these words, He said to his Vinedresser, *Behold these three years &c.* Behold it, and be astonished at this trees unfruitfulness.

Obser. 4. God reckoneth the dayes and years of grace which pass over us, and will put them upon the account of all unfruitful persons. *These three years I come seeking fruit and find none.*

Obser. 5. Impenitent persons are not only wicked and unfruitful themselves, but also do hinder others from bringing forth fruit. *Why cumbereth it the ground? Why doth it make the earth and trees near it, barren and unfruitful?*

Obser. 6. Such is the compassion of God to unfruitful persons, that notwithstanding their deserts of death and damnation, yet through the mediation of Christ, he is pleased to add more time and means for the bringing them to repentance. *Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it*

it, and dung it : let it stand awhile longer, and I will bestow more skill, cost and pains to make it fruitful.

If the means of grace shall at last prevail with men to bring them to repentance, it shall be well on all hands, notwithstanding all their former unfruitfulness : if it bear fruit, well. *Obser. 7.*

If all means used for a long time, shall not bring men to repentance, no intercession shall be made more for them, but they shall be cut down for ever. *Obser. 8.*

CHAP. IV.

I Shall begin with the first of these, viz. *Obser. 1.*
That where and on whom God bestows the means of repentance and of grace, there and from them God expecteth the fruits of grace and of repentance. If thou art a figtree planted in his Vineyard, he expects to gather figs from thee ; if God hath bestowed this special favour on thee, as to admit thee into his Church, to bring thee under the Gospel and all ordinances of grace, he expecteth thy obedience to the Gospel, thy repentance at the preaching of the Gospel, that thou shouldest bring forth fruits

*Maldonats.
in loc.*

fruits meet for repentance : Gods coming and seeking fruit, is, (as *Maldonat* rightly Paraphraseth it) his turning his eyes this way and that way to behold who repenteth, who believeth.

For proof of this point, read Isa. 5. 1, 2. *Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his Vineyard: my well beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful hill.* The Prophet calls Christ his well beloved : I will sing to my beloved a song of my beloved, that is, a song that Christ his best beloved did put into his mouth to sing : let us see the matter of his song — *my Beloved hath a Vineyard in a very fruitful hill :* that is, Christ hath planted his Church in an excellent place, a fruitful soil, hath given her powerful means to enable her to bear fruit. *And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest Vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a Winepress therein :* By these Rhetorical terms, the Prophet sheweth Gods wonderful care for his Church and people, for their Salvation ; he useth all means to make men in his Church fruitful, and removeth what may hinder fruit-bearing. *And he looked that it should bring forth*

forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. That is, Christ expected to gather faith, repentance, holiness ; but instead of pretious grapes, it brought forth stinking grapes, as the Hebrew word signifies : instead of faith, it brought forth infidelity, distrust ; instead of holiness, all manner of wickedness ; instead of obedience all manner of disobedience : But contrary to his expectation, God sees nothing but drunkenness, swearing, lying, oppression, as if they were trees planted in a vast howling wilderness, and not in a fruitful Vineyard ; as if they were men living among Cannibals and Pagans, where no means of Grace is ; and not in the Church where the Gospel of faith and holiness is Preached.

CHAP. V.

SECT. I.

CONSIDER we two things by way of explication of this point.

1. God expects the same fruits for kind, as men expect ; from Vines Grapes ; from Fig trees Figs ; and from what seed they sow in their fields, the same grain, as from wheat

wheat they expect wheat, &c. So God expecteth fruit answerable to the seed he soweth: if men have no more then natural means given them, God expecteth such fruit, *Rom. I. 19, 21.* God expecteth from Pagans and Infidels that they should give that glory and service to his Infinite Majesty according to that knowledge they have of him from the law of nature in their consciences, and the book of the creatures, wherein are visibly written the invisible attributes and properties of God: he expects natural worship from natural means of knowledge. But from us who are in the Vineyard of the Church, and have an holy Gospel, holy means, holy ordinances, God expecteth the fruits of holiness and righteousness; God expecteth faith, and fruits meet for faith from every one of us who have the word of faith preached; he expects repentance from us who are by the Gospel called to repentance: if he expects answerable fruit to his cost bestowed on trees in an howling wilderness from Pagans, then much more from trees planted in Paradise, from all men planted in his Church.

2. God expects fruits proportionable to the means of grace he bestows upon men: where much is given, much is required:

is in the Parable God required double where two talents were given, and fivefold where five talents were given: the more talents any man hath, the more profit is expected from him: and as the Apostle saith in another case, *He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly*: So where God soweth sparingly, he will reap sparingly, but reap he will: have we the means in more power, for longer continuance than others? God expecteth more faith, more repentance, more knowledge, more holiness than from others: the more Sabbaths you have, the more Sermons you hear, more fruits are expected from you: the longer you live under converting and sanctifying means, the more God expects you should abound in every good work. Men do expect that trees of longest standing in their Orchards, should be taller, bigger, and more fruitful, than trees newly planted: how sharply doth the Apostle reprove the Hebrews, because their knowledge was not proportionable to their time and means of grace! *Heb. 5.12. For the time ye ought to be teachers, but ye have need one teach you, which be the first principles of the Oracles of God; as who should say, For the time that ye have heard the Gospel,*

Gospel, and enjoyed all saving means, ye ought to be as knowing as your teachers are; but alas, you need to be taught the A. B. C. of Christianity.

SECT. 2.

2. **C**ONVERSION and grace is here called fruit: it is a Metaphor frequently used by the Holy Ghost; in *Gal. 5. 22*. Graces are called the fruits of the spirit, because they are the native and noble off-spring of the spirit of God in us: it is called *the fruit of righteousness*, *Jam. 3. 18*. and *Heb. 12. 11*. and believers are called *trees of righteousness*. The reasons are these;

Reas. 1.

Because repentance and grace, is as fruit, much desired: how doth the Vine-dresser long for the Vintage: the Husbandman for the Harvest? *My soul desired the first ripe fruit*, said the Prophet, *Micah. 7. 1*. Every one desireth the fruit of their labours; even thus our repentance and conversion is very desirable: how doth the soul of God long for thy conversion! Turn ye; when shall it once be? how doth Christ desire thy conversion! how often would I have gathered you,

you, but ye would not ! oh that thou didst know in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace ! how do all the workmen in the Lords Vineyard long, desire, and pray for your repentance ! *I beseech you be reconciled : we beseech you not to receive the grace of God in vain.*

2. Because our repentance and sanctification is as grateful and acceptable to God as fruits are to men : how acceptable are figs and grapes to the master of the Vineyard ! how acceptable are fruitful fields to the Husbandman ! oh the pleasure and content that all men take in the fruits of their labours ! even so is thy faith, thy repentance, pleasing and acceptable to God ; he takes pleasure in nothing else but in holy fruits ; as *Jotham* in his Parable said of Wine, *that it cheereth the heart of God and Man* : tis more true of mens conversion, it cheereth the heart of God, Angels and Men : there is joy in Heaven when a sinner is converted, joy in the Church at the conversion of a sinner.

3. Because repentance is as precious to God as fruit is to men. *The Husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth,* *Jam. 5. 7.* the Apostle calls it precious, because of the necessariness of it to the use of

of man : were it not for the fruits of the earth men could not live ; so is thy conversion and repentance precious ; thy faith is precious, all the fruits of thy spirit are precious, and therefore precious because they are necessary to salvation ; no holiness, no happiness.

4. Because repentance and all graces are the blessing of God upon the means of grace, as the fruits of the earth are his blessing of mans labour ; men may plow and sow, dig and dung, plant and water, but the whole increase is of God : men cannot make a tree to bring forth one fig, nor a field to bear one grain of corn : the Prophet *Malachi* calleth the fruits of the earth *the blessing of God*, Malach. 3. 10. even so is the conversion of a sinner the blessing of God on the means of grace : we pray and preach : you hear and meditate ; but that you convert and believe, it is of God only. *Paul* planteth, yet he is nothing ; *Apollos* watereth, yet he is nothing ; but God is all in all that gives the increase ; he giveth faith, he giveth repentance : it is he that makes men that are by nature thistles and thorns, to be by grace vines and figg trees, to bring forth grapes and figs, faith and holiness.

5 Because

5. Because as fruit tendeth to the honour and praise of the husbandmen, so our conversion is to the great honour of God and the Ministry of his word: it is the Crown of divine free grace, as *Paul* saith concerning the converted *Thessalonians*, *ye are our Crown, ye are our rejoycing in the day of the Lord Jesus*. How do men praise the skill and labour of an husbandman, when they behold the fruitfulness of his ground and fields? yea themselves glory in the fruitfulness of them. God is glorified, his grace is magnified, in the fruitfulness of Christians. *They glorified God in me*; that is, in my conversion, saith the Apostle, *Gal. 1. ult.*

CHAP. VI.

The Reasons why God doth expect fruit.

THE first reason why God expecteth fruit is, because there is all equity that he should expect fruit from us whom he hath planted in this Vineyard of his Church where he dwells, for which he is so careful, on which he bestows his choice favours, the Ordinances of grace, and

Reas. 1.

P

means

means of conversion, which distinguisheth us from all people in the whole world besides : shall men expect fruit from trees which they plant in their gardens, and fruit from the fields they plough and manure ? and shall not God expect from those men precious fruit, whom he planteth, watereth, manureth, whom he warmeth with the beams of the Sun of righteousness, and watereth with dew from heaven ?

2. Because what God doth in his Church and for his Church, is not in vain ; which were in vain, did not he expect fruit answerable to care, cost, and pains. Can we imagine that God would have a Vineyard, a Church in the world, appoint such powerful means and Ordinances, as the Word and Sacraments, that he would set up a Ministry in his Church, to preach repentance, to call to repentance, to turn men from sin and Satan, and lay such a dreadful charge on the subordinate Vine-dressers, the Ministers to Preach the Word in season and out of season ? would God do all this for no end ? doubtless, the only design of God in planting a Vineyard, and setting Trees in it, in all these Ordinances, is that he may gather fruit from

from us, even the fruit of righteousness and holiness. If God did not expect such fruit from men in his Church, he would have had no Church, no Ordinance, no Ministry in the world; the whole world should have been a barren wilderness before him, and all the men in the world should have been but briars and thorns, cursed trees.

3. As he is the great God and our Lord, he may expect duty from us: it is your duty to turn to God, to repent, to believe, to bring forth fruits of holiness: a Master may expect service from a servant, much more may the Lord; especially considering that he hath afforded us such gracious helps and means to enable us to perform duty, to bring forth fruit: There is a necessity laid upon millions in the world to repent and turn to God, that never shall be trees of righteousness, because they have not the means of grace; they are trees standing in a wilderness: the same necessity is upon us to bring forth fruits to God, and he hath given us fruitful means; he may in justice require these precious fruits of every one of us; and know that he doth require them of us:

and woe to us if we bring not forth fruit meet for repentance.

use.

You are the fig-trees planted in the Vineyard, you live in the Church, to you is given much means, and of long continuance: you have had many calls to repentance; you may with as much reason deny that the Sun hath shone upon you, as deny that you have had the means of repentance and conversion among you: let us all be exhorted to bring forth fruit; now even now bring forth fruit meet for repentance. God hath come seeking fruit from you: God doth come to day, this hour, this very minute seeking fruit. Oh do ye now answer Gods expectation, let him find the fruit of repentance on you: Oh do not frustrate Gods expectation any more: consider ye, that the greatest benefit of your bearing fruit to God will be yours. It is no advantage to God; he is infinitely happy without your fruit, it is your souls benefit: let God gather fruit from you, and then you shall reap life everlasting; this will be the fruit of your fruit to God. Let it be matter of shame and grief to you, because of your unfruitfulness under such means of

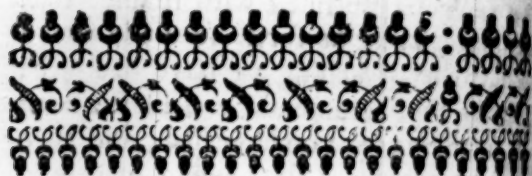
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grace so long enjoyed ; the best trees
have cause to be filled with shame, that
they have brought forth so little fruit :
consider the preaching ye have had, the
Sabbaths, the Sacraments, and all the helps
and furtherances you have had ; and then
it will be matter of shame and sorrow to
us, to consider how fruitless we are.

P 3

LUKE



LUKE 13. 6.

He came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

Serm. 11. Preached January 22. 1661.

CHAP. VII.

THE words being a Parable, are spoken of God after the manner of men, who alwayes seek fruit where they plant, plough, and sow seed; so God expects to gather fruit from them whom he planteth, and bestoweth on them all means which tend to make them fruitful in every good work; and his finding no fruit, is mens not doing what God requireth and approveth of: where God gives

gives means of repentance and faith, there not repenting, not believing, not obeying, in Gods not finding fruit.

He found none.

None] is taken either comparatively, or absolutely. 1. *Comparatively*, as who should say; none to speak of, it is so little in the best. 2. *Absolutely*, none at all, so it is here, because he threatens to cut it down.

God oftentimes finds no fruit on them from whom he expects so much. Where much is expected, there none is gathered; he finds no repentance, no faith, no holiness, no sobriety, no temperance, no godliness, no knowledge of God, no fear of God. Many men stand in the Lords Vineyard, like May-poles in a street, having neither root nor sap, neither bark, nor leaf, nor fruit; or as the figg tree which our Saviour cursed, that withered all over from top to root. They are as prophane, ignorant, ungodly persons, as those men are on whom God bestoweth no converting means: as very Infidels and Atheists as the most barbarous *Indians* and *Cannibals* in any part of the world. *Obser.*

CHAP. VIII.

IN handling this Doctrine, I shall first lay down some Propositions by way of Explication, that none may deceive themselves, thinking they bear fruit, when indeed they bring forth no fruit at all: then I shall shew the causes of this unfruitfulness, why God finds none in them.

The first Proposition is, that God ac-
 Propos. 1. counteth nothing to be fruit, but what is true, right and good; it must be true faith, true repentance, true holiness; if thy faith be not saving faith, it is no faith; if thy repentance be not godly, it is not repentance: if thy love be not unfeigned, and thy obedience be not sincere, it is not the fruit of love nor of obedience; if those graces thou thinkest thy self to have, be not the noble and the royal off-spring of the Spirit of God in thee, thy graces are not graces. Thy temperance, thy sobriety, thy bounty and charity to the poor, if they proceed not from the Spirit of regeneration, is no fruit at all; they are but the Apples of *Sodom*, beautiful to the eye, but all rottenness within; all the good that grows on an unregenerate man, *As-
 sin* called *Splendida peccata*, glittering sins.
 Hence

Hence it is that the Scripture calls upon us to bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; that is, they must be agreeable to true saving repentance ; otherwise they are none at all in Gods account: God finds no fruit, where he finds no truth of grace. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit*, saith our Saviour ; our fruit must be good , pleasing, grateful to God, or else it is no fruit; wild grapes are no fruit at all.

It is fruit God seeks for : it is not leaves, Propos. 1. blossoms, buds ; these are not fruit : God may find these things where he finds no fruit at all.

1. What if God findeth the green and broad leaves of Christian profession on thee? it is nothing : profession of piety without godliness is nothing but the wild grapes of hypocrisie, which the soul of God abhorreth ; no man counteth that a fruitful tree, that beareth leaves only.

2. What if God find on thee the fair blossoms of external righteousness without inward holiness? it is no fruit in Gods account ; the Pharisees brought forth such blossoms, yet saith *John* to them, bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; God expects better fruit : see we not in nature, that many trees bring forth blossoms, yet bring no fruit at all ?

3. Again,

3. Again, What if God findeth the fruits of religious duties? yet without faith and holiness this is no fruit in Gods account. A man full of religious duties without true grace, is a figg-tree full of leaves, without fruit. Albeit it be most true, that he that brings forth true grace, aboundeth in all religious duties, there is no tree that bringeth forth fruit without leaves, but many bring forth leaves without fruit.

4. What if God find on men some good desires, morions, purposes, some affections to godliness? if these grow not into act, God finds no fruit on such: good affections may be called buds, but buds are no fruits: in nature we find many trees abound with buds in the Spring time, yet bring forth no fruit at all in the time of fruit-bearing: buds are frequently nipt with the frost, and so die; even so it is with many men, they may abound with good motions, good affections, good purposes, but they die, and come to nothing: God finds no fruit on them.

5. Admit God cometh, and findeth all these growing on a man; he bears leaves of profession, blossoms of external righteousness, and is full of good affections:

as in nature, fruit bearing Trees bear all these; yet if God finds no faith in his heart, no sound repentance, no sincere obedience, this man is a barren figg-tree in the Lords Vineyard, whom he will cut down; for we must bring forth that very fruit which God requireth, or we bear not at all. God will not be put off with leaves and blossoms: Oh it is pittie that such men should be fuel for the fire of hell, yet they shall be: and if God will do this to these green trees, what will he do to the dry trees?

There are very many on whom God *Propos. 3.* finds none of these things; he cometh to some, and seeks for the leaves of profession on them, and findeth scarce any leaves on them: how many are there who bear the excellent name of a Christian, yet nothing of Christianity is found in them! he comes and seeks for the very knowledge of God; they have not the knowledge of God: he comes and seeks for duties in them, he finds not so much as praying or reading among them: many there are that know not how to pray; they are as barren in duty, as if they never were taught what duties God requireth; he cometh and seeketh for morality
and

and civility on them; he finds not the fruit growing on them: civil righteousness and common honesty grow but here and there on some professing Christians. He comes and seeks for some good purposes, dispositions, and affections in them; he finds not a good purpose in them, no love to holiness, no desires after it, yea not so much as any love and delight in any thing, way, or person that is holy.

Propos. 4. It is grievous when he comes, and seeks but finds no fruit that pleaseth him: but it is much the worse, when he finds on them such fruit as his soul loatheth and abhorreth, Isaiah 5. 4. *He looketh for grapes, but behold wild grapes*: behold stinking grapes, which stink in the nostrils of God, men and Angels; yea stink in the nostrils of a civilized Pagan: Behold he finds drunkenness, swearing, fornication, adultery, all manner of open and notorious vices, fruits which can please none but Devils. Yea, though God useth all means to beat down this cursed fruit by his threatnings and judgements; yet as they say of some trees, the more they are beaten, the more fruitful they are: so there are too many among us, the more they are threatned, reprov'd, exhort'd, and press'd to leave those

those abominable vices, the more abound-
ing they are in those Sodomitical fruits ;
They are drunkarns, and so they will be ;
they do and will swear, notwithstanding
all the powerful means used to make them
bring forth better fruit. As the specula-
tive Atheist saith in his heart, there is no
God ; so the practical Atheist saith in his
heart, God shall find no other fruit on me
but drunkenness and swearing, they resolve
to be wicked, and set repentance and ho-
liness at defiance : Oh what a change doth
wickedness work in men ! Consider them
as planted by God in his Church, they are
figg-trees ; but their own wilful and obsti-
nate wickedness hath turned them into
briars and thorns, who are nigh unto cur-
sing, and their fearful end is to be burnt
in Hell.

CHAP. IX.

Sheweth whence it is, and what are the causes why God finds none in them.

HERE let me speak to you what God himself speaks to such fruitless men, Isa. 5. 3, 4. *Now then ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and ye men of Judah judge I pray you between me and my Vineyard: here God refers the matter to be judged of even by those of whom he complaineth: what is to be done more to my Vineyard which I have not done to it?* Consider and judge whether I am in fault or you, that ye are so unfruitful: judge whether I have neglected any means of making you fruitful, God doth and will appeal to all our consciences, to judge between him and us who is in fault. I may thus paraphrase on the words; Ye inhabitants of *Walsall*, and ye men of this Congregation, judge I pray you, between God and your selves, who is in fault, that so much drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, cursing, lying, oppression, fornication abounds among us; you may and will find that God is in no fault; but you are in the only fault that

that he finds no fruit on you; that he finds no faith, no repentance, no holiness on you: that he finds such wild grapes, such stinking fruit growing on you, and abounding in you. I will first shew that God is not in fault, nor are Ministers in the fault; but we our selves are only in fault.

That God is not in fault, will appear if we consider these particulars.

1. God hath planted us in his Church a fat and fruitful soil: all the world without the Church is a barren heath, an howling wilderness, a place of salt-pits: had God left us to stand in the barren heath of Paganism, we should have some excuse for our selves; but that God hath called us out from thence, and planted us in his own garden, in his Paradise, what excuse have we, or can we make? if a tree brings not fruit which stands in a fat and excellent soil, the fault is in the tree, not in the husbandman that planted it there: if a man standing in the Church of God, beareth not fruit, the fault is in man, not in God, who planted him therein: Our very being and standing in the holy Catholique Church obligeth us to bear fruit to God.

2. God hath carefully provided all necessary

cessary means requisite to enable us to bear fruit. Isa. 54. *What could be done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it?* as if God had said, I have done enough for this peoples conversion and reformation: I have bestowed upon them, my word and Ordinances which are able to save their souls: I have sent forth labourers my Ministers to warn them to repent, to call and invite them to repentance: I have threatned evil against them, I have promised them all good, I have bestowed many mercies and benefits on them, and I have also punished them. I have given them all necessary instruments and means of salvation, and yet I find no fruit on them.

3. God hath offered grace to us, but men willingly reject the offers of God, 2 Cor. 6. 1. *We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.* God by the Gospel and our Ministry offereth his grace to you, but men receive it in vain, they make light of all Gods offers.

4. God oftentimes sends down his spirit to move upon mens hearts secretly and inwardly moving and exciting them to repentance; but men quench his motions, strive against his convictions, that

all

all his spiritual and strong motions vanish like the print of a seal stamped upon water: Oh judge whether God be in fault that ye have no fruit growing on you.

Neither are Ministers in fault, that ye have no fruit on you: we do the duty of Ministers: we pray, we preach the word of God to you; we plant, we sow, we digg about you, we dung you; we teach and instruct you how to repent, how to believe, and we do the duty of diligent husbandmen in the Lords Vineyard: Judge I pray you between Ministers and your selves: What could we have done more to you that we have not done to you and for you? Every mans conscience shall one day lay the whole fault on themselves, that God found no fruit on them standing in his Vineyard.

Hereunto let me add, neither are the means in any fault: for the Ordinances of God are in their own nature as apt to make the soul fruitful, as ploughing, sowing, manuring is to make the earth fruitful.

Q

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

*Sheweth what fault is in our selves, that
we bear no fruit to God.*

1. **T**HE grand cause is our evil, dead, depraved and barren hearts: if the tree be dead at the root, it will never bring forth fruit: if the ground be naturally barren; it will never bear fruit, though the husbandman should be never so laborious in ploughing, sowing, manuring &c. though he buyeth the best seed which can be had for money, yet all is to no purpose, if the soil be by nature barren: it is so in spirituals; the hearts of men are desperately wicked and barren above all things, that though God by his Ministers useth all means to make them fruitful; they are diligent and zealous in preaching, praying, instructing, exhorting, reproving, yet all in vain; because the hearts of men are barren by nature, they are trees dead at the root. *Apollo's* watering, dressing and pruning it, is to little purpose.

2. Mens wretched unbelief is another cause: John 12. 38. *Lord, who hath believed our report? We preach, but men believe*

believe us not; we shew men the danger of sin, the horrors of hell, of judgement to come, and so perswade men to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance; but men do not believe us, therefore bring forth no fruit: so Heb. 4. 2. *The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith.* For know, that to the bringing forth the fruit of saving faith, and repentance, a dogmatical or historical faith is necessarily required; for men will never repent of sin and turn to God, till first they assent to this doctrine as a truth, that God will turn all the wicked into hell: unbelief makes men say in their hearts there is no God, no heaven, no hell, no judgement: let us eat and drink, for too morrow we shall die, there will be an end both of our souls and bodies.

3. Mens not receiving the seed of the word is another cause: it lies in the ear, and goes not down into the heart and conscience: men do but hear it, and never mind the word afterwards: every truth is taken from them: our Saviour in the parable of the sower, gives this as one cause why men are unfruitful, *Mat. 13. 24.* *Some seed fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up:* all

seed cast on the high-ways and beaten paths is food for Birds: so it is with men. Gods Ministers sow the precious seed of the word, and it lies upon them like seed in the high-way; the Devil comes and takes all from them, devoureth every grain of truth: what fruit can we expect from

Parous in loc. such? A learned Divine on the place saith,

By the high-way side are meant all ignorant, careless, and forgetful hearers of the word; and all prophane despisers of the word of God; from them the Devil catcheth all they hear for the good of their souls.

4. The hardness of mens hearts is a cause of unfruitfulness: the best seed cast upon rocks becomes unfruitfull: this cause our Saviour also giveth, *Matth. 13. 5.* Some fell upon stony places, in such places the seed can never take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward: this is the very reason why there is so much preaching and so little fruit: we Ministers plough upon rocks, sow upon stones; that all our calls to repentance prove ineffectual, *Rom. 2. 4.* The Apostle coupleth hardness of heart and impenitency together; first hardness; then impenitency; this stony heart must be taken away before we can bring forth any fruit meet for repentance.

5. Mens hearts are over-grown with thorns and worldly weeds, and so prove unfruitful: this cause is given by our Saviour, Matth. 13. 22. *He that receiveth seed, is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful:* his heart is empty of grace, whose head is full of worldly cares; they choke the power of the word, they choke all motions and convictions, they take mens minds off from the meditation and practice of the word to the saving of their souls.

6. Mens love of the pleasures of sin, and hatred of the strictness of holiness is another cause. *Luther* said of himself, that till the grace of God had subdued him, that his soul hated the word *Repent*; he could not endure to hear of parting and turning from sin, and leaving the pleasures and profits of sin; even thus do the hearts of many wicked men, who have for a long while habituated themselves in sin, and have drunk deep of the pleasures thereof; they do hate and abhor all exhortations and warnings to repent; they hate the Word *Repent*, and the very duty of repentance; they hate all

holy strictness and preciseness, that all means prove ineffectual.

7. Men taking of that for fruit which is not, is a great cause of their unfruitfulness: when men judge their leaves of profession, and blossoms of duty and external righteousness to be fruits, and rest there, no wonder if they be careless of bringing forth better fruit. How do good meanings pass with some for good fruit? how do occasional and temporary affections pass with others for good fruit? the Angel of the *Laodicean Church* conceived he was rich, and never looked further for better riches.

8. Another cause of unfruitfulness is the Devil; he is busie to sow his damnable tares where God soweth his seed; his wicked tares being more suitable to our depraved hearts, do spring up and grow, & make the word become unfruitful. *If an Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 2 Cor. 4. 3, 4.* If the converting and sanctifying power thereof be hid from any, that they feel not the working thereof, it is an evidence that such men are lost; that is, that they shall perish and be damned for ever: the reason why it is hidden from them, is, *because the god of this world*

world hath blinded their eyes, that is, the Devil hath shut their eyes, hardened their hearts against the light and power of the Gospel,

9. Mens own wilful carelesness is the cause of their unfruitfulness: how do men slight and neglect the very means of conversion, willingly turning away their ears from hearing the Law, and neglecting all means and duties, which in a natural moral way tend to make them fruitful: for albeit men are compared to trees, yet they are not altogether like trees, which contribute nothing to their own bearing of fruit: for men having reason and understanding, must do what they can by nature, and in a moral way do for the bearing of fruit: they must and can hear the word, but they will not; men must and can remember the word, but they do not; men must and can in a natural and rational way consider what the word of God saith, but they do not; yea men do not contribute so much as trees to their own fruit-bearing; for trees will suck that moisture which the heavens drop down upon the earth about them; but men do not suck moisture from the word which God raineth upon them. This may

answer that great question, which the proud reason of men cavill ng against God, puts forth.

Quest. The Question is, *Why doth God blame men for not bearing fruit, seeing it is not in their own power?*

Resp. 1. Who art thou O man that disputest against God, requiring a reason of his righteous judgements!

2. God doth not, and will not cut men down meerly for want of power to bear fruit, but because men do not what they may and can do in order to fruit bearing: God will damn men, not in that they cannot, but because they will not bear fruit: they love and like to bring forth wild grapes, and not sweet grapes: they love sin and perseverance in sin, rather than holiness and following after it: obstinacy of will is the proper cause of mens damnation.

10. God for the punishment of mens unfruitfulness under great means, and of long continuance, doth at last give them up, takes no care of them, and judicially permits them to be unfruitful: The Psalmist saith, *He turneth a fruitful Land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.* Psalm 107. 34. it is for the wickedness

wickedness of mens hearts and lives, that he saith to men, as Christ to the figg-tree, never let fruit grow upon thee more; never repent, never believe.

CHAP. XI.

The Uses of the point.

LEarn hence how much sin hath depraved the nature of men; it hath made men so bad, that no good means can make them good: I have read of some waters that will turn trees cast into them, into stones, and it is sad that the waters of the Sanctuary should be an occasion of turning mens hearts into Rock and Adamant: Much means are given us, and God hath come and sought for fruit on us, and he finds none; and which is worse then none, how hath he come and found instead of repentance and holiness, swearing, drunkenness, and all manner of detestable wickedness on us? and (which is worse than all) he still finds us abounding in all manner of wickedness: still men add drunkenness to thirst, oath to oath, sin to sin: how are the hearts and lives of men, like the

the field of the sluggard, over-runne with the abominable thorns of vice and sin !

Use 2.

Let me exhort and admonish every one of you to bring forth fruit ; let God come and find some fruit growing on you : to day while it is called to day bring forth fruits meet for repentance, which are very pleasing and acceptable to God : oh do not disappoint God's expectations any longer.

1. Consider that God comes this day, this hour, this Sermon seeking for fruit ; let him not complain and say, I find none, but still I find all wickedness in these men.

2. Consider that your sins are but *the unfruitful works of darkness*, Eph. 5. 11. they will bring forth no good to your souls, nothing but wrath and vengeance.

3. What excuse will you, or can you make for your unfruitfulness I how will God stop all your mouths, when he shall say, I planted you in my Vineyard, I bestowed all converting means upon you, yet found I no fruit growing on you.

4. Consider what the Apostle saith of unfruitful

unfruitful men, Heb. 6. 8. *That ground which beareth briars and thorns is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burnt*: while you are unfruitful, you are rejected, you are nigh to cursing; the curse of God hangs over your heads, and every moment you are liable to be burnt in hell.

5. You may fear lest God should remove the Gospel from you, because of your unfruitfulness, according to that threatening of our Saviour, Matth. 21. 43. *Therefore I say unto you, the Kingdom of God (i.) the Gospel, shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruit thereof*: 'Tis better for us that God should take away health, wealth, peace, corn, wine, oil, sun, moon and stars from us, than to take away the Gospel from us: take that away, and all hopes of repentance, faith and salvation are taken away from us: take away the Kingdom of Heaven, and then Hell will take us.

How doth it concern us to begg Gods *Use 3.* blessing on all the means of grace! Lord thou hast planted me in thy Vineyard under thine ordinances, yet without thee I cannot bring forth fruit: Lord say to my soul, *Be fruitful and multiply*: it is that word

word of blessing which to this day makes trees to bring forth fruit according to their kind. Finally, let God have all the praise from thee, who art by the means of Grace made fruitful : it is not the diligence of *Paul* nor *Apollos*, nor Ministers, nor thy own diligence, but Gods own free giving the blessing to the means, will make thee to bring forth fruit.

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LUKE 13. 7.

Then said he unto the dresser of the Vineyard, Behold these three years come I, seeking fruit on this Figg-tree, and find none, Cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground?

Serm. 12. Preached January 29. 1661.

CHAP. XII.

IN this Verse you hear what a sad complainz the Lord made of the unfruitfulness of his figg-tree, in which are these things observable.

I. The owner or Master complaining, is God, who after the manner of men is brought in complaining.

II. The

II. The person to whom this complaint is made; to the dresser of this Vineyard; by him is meant Christ, because he is appointed by God to be *Custos & cultor Vineæ*, the keeper and dresser of his Church: he is the Head of the Church, the whole government of the Church is on his shoulders, because Christ hath all judgment committed to him; it is he that hath power to condemn, to destroy, to cut down: he hath the axe of vengeance in his hand to fell unfruitful trees, and to cast them into hell fire. True it is, Ministers are subordinate Vine-dressers; they are labourers sent by Christ to dress his Vineyard: they are to plant, to water, to prune, to lop, to digg about it, and to dung the trees by the Preaching of the word; but it is not meant of them, because they have not power to cut down.

III. The thing complained of: he came for three years together seeking fruit, and found none: here we have two considerable particulars.

I. Gods wondering at this trees unfruitfulness; he speaks after the manner of men. *Behold*, Is it not a strange thing that a tree of my planting in my own Vineyard should bring forth no fruit?

2. The

2. The space of time how long God had waited, expecting it to bring forth fruit — *these three years*; hence Divines gather, that if men do not bring forth fruits of grace after they have enjoyed the means of grace for a certain space of time, it is very improbable that ever they will bring forth fruit. By these years we are to understand a certain space of time which God gives men to repent; this certain number is put for an uncertain; for some have a longer space given them; others have a shorter, as I shall further shew.

IV. A terrible sentence passed upon this Figg-tree: *Cut it down*: it is fit for nothing but to be fuel for the fire: those men whom no means can make good, are worthy to be cast into hell: graceless men are fit companions for graceless Devils.

V Here we have a reason of this severe threatening: *Why cumbereth it the ground?* it is not only an unfruitful tree, but it is also a pernicious tree to the ground; it makes the ground about it barren, it spoileth other trees: Wicked men are not only injurious to their own souls, but to the souls of others: they hinder others from Conversion; they are a very burden to the Church.

C H A P.

CHAP. XIII.

THIS Text affordeth many Doctrines, but I will handle but three from them.

Obser. I.

The Lord reckons the dayes, the times, the years of Grace which pass over us, and will put them upon the account of every unfruitful person. He reckons every Sabbath day that passeth over your heads, whether you prophane or sanctifie them, and how you spend them; and will bring every man to a strict account of his mispending Sabbaths, which are the principal times of Grace, the Market-dayes of Grace and Salvation: One Sabbath-day is better than a thousand dayes of labour: he reckons every Sermon men have heard, and shall hear, and calls men to a strict account for them: so many hundred Sermons thou hast heard, yet thou repentedst not: he reckons how many years you have lived under the means of Grace: these three years; these ten years; these twenty years; these forty years you have enjoyed the word of Grace, the Ministry of Reconciliation; and men shall give an account for so many: *How often would I have gathered*

thered you under my wings, and ye would not ! (1.) I would oftentimes have gathered you ; as often as Christ hath spread out the wings of his Gospel ; as often as Christ by his Ministers hath exhorted, warned and commanded us to repent ; so often Christ would have gathered us under his wings, but men will not. *All the day long have I stretched forth my hands to a gainsaying and disobedient people*, from morning to evening ; from the first day men have heard the Gospel, to the last ; from the morning of the day of Grace, to the evening thereof.

You may find how the Prophets do reckon the time of their Ministry among a people, *Isa. 1. 1. The Vision of Isaiah the Son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the dayes of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah Kings of Judah* : It is as if he had said ; During the reign of these four Kings, I have from God preached to you ; I have invited you to repent, exhorted you to repent ; I have from God commanded you to repent ; I have in Gods stead offered Grace and Mercy to you ; I have laboured the salvation of your souls : it is computed that he preached to them for the space of seventy

R years,

years. The like doth *Jeremiah, chap. 25. 3.* *From the thirteenth year of Josiah, even to this day, the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken to you, rising early, and speaking, but ye have not hearkened. (1.)* God for that space of time had ipoken to them diligently, seasonably, and continually, but they obeyed not the Word of God: all the Prophets pains and diligence could not make that people bring forth fruit. Now, why are these years set down, but to note that God reckons how long Ministers preach to you Repen^{ance} and Faith! how long this Minister and that Minister: and how long you have sate under the Ministry of the Word; and men shall give a strict account of their not profiting under this and that mans Ministry.

Let us look upon Gods reckoning with the *Israelites* in the wilderness: *these forty years have I been grieved with this Generation, and said, It is a people that do erre in their hearts, and they have not known my wayes, Psal. 95. 10.* God had for the space of forty years taught them his wayes, and they knew them not. May not God reckon, so many years have passed over the heads of many of us, these forty years have

have I been grieved with this man, with that man; still they erre in their hearts and lives, and though my wayes have been made known to them, yet they are sottishly ignorant, or wilfully ignorant, and do not, or will not know my wayes. Christ exercised his Ministry three years among the Jews, and wrought his wonderful Miracles before them; never had any people such a Minister as they had, and saw such stupendous and so many Miracles as they did: yet were they fruitless: Now those interpreters on my Text, that take *These three years* for Christs Ministry among them, do give this sence, that Christ reckons those three years, and will reckon with that generation concerning them.

CHAP. XIV.

SECT. I.

IN the prosecution of this truth, I will first lay down some propositions, which are Doctrines plainly implied in my Text.

I might, but I shall not insist on this: God hath assigned to every Nation under Prop. 1.

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Heaven a day, a time, a year of grace and salvation before the judgement day shall come, Matth. 28. 19. *Go and teach all Nations.* Matth. 16. 15. *Go ye into all the world, and Preach the Gospel to every creature*; which is to be understood successively, and not at once: every Nation hath had, or shall have the golden Scepter of Grace held forth to them; all shall have their invitation to come to Christ: hence the Gospel is compared to the Sun, which circleth the world, and illigh-eneth it successively, and begins in the East, and sets in the West. Many Nations have had their three years of Grace and Salvation: the Jews had their three years; the *Asian* Churches had theirs: *England* hath her three years yet continuing. And as Provinces and Nations, so Cities and Towns have their years of Grace: *Jerusalem* had her day: *Rome*, *Corinth*, *Ephesus*, had their three years: you of this place have your three years yet continued to you: oh that the Lord Christ may not weep and lament over you, as once he did over *Jerusalem*, Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace! but seeing Nations and Congregations are better compared to Vineyards than

than Trees, the similitude suiteth better to persons, I will speak no more of this.

God assigneth to every person a space to *Prop. 2.*

bring forth fruits of repentance. *Nemo est cui non sit hora sua*, Every man in the Church hath his hour, his three years allotted to him to work out his Salvation, Rev. 2. 21. *I gave her space to repent, but she repented not*: there is not one man standing in Gods Vineyard, but hath a space given him to repent; every one of us have a space to repent given us; this very day is a further space given us: the wish of my soul is, that it may not be said of any one that heareth me this day, He repented not: and that Christ may never complain of any of us, as he did of *Jerusalem*, *Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes, thou art never like to see them more.*

Although every man hath his day, his *Prop. 3.*

years, and certain space; yet there is an inequality of continuance of this day in respect of persons: as we see the natural

dayes are not of equal length, some are longer, some are shorter; so is the day of particular mens grace: some have a longer, some have a shorter day; hence it is

*Kai tōto
nōd' tēs
tōi xpeiv,
πi α' ε' ε'
&c.*

called sometimes an hour, in Scripture, Rom. 13. 11. *now it is high time to awake out of sleep*; in the Greek it is, *now is the hour*. Sometimes it is called a day, 2 Cor. 6. 2. *Now is the day of Salvation*. Sometimes a year, *Three years*, as in my Text. One man hath but an hour in comparison of others, another hath a day in comparison of others; another hath a year, another three years: the old World had an hundred and twenty years allotted to repent; the Jews had forty years allotted to repent; the Ninivites had but forty dayes allotted them to repent; the Figg-tree had three years. As it is Gods prerogative to assign a time, so also to assign how long every mans particular day of grace shall continue.

Prop. 4.

The longest day of grace is but short, and hath its night: as in natural dayes the longest day hath its night; and being compared to other spaces of time, a day is but a short space: it is as true of grace: the longest space hath its period; *the night cometh*, saith our Saviour, *when no man can work*: and the longest day of grace is but a short space: a man may out-live the day of grace and Salvation: *Jerusalem* did survive the day of her gracious visitation

tion : it is therefore in Scripture called an hour, a day, to note the shortness of it.

SECT. 2.

Here it may be demanded, How long *Quest.*
may a mans day of grace and sal-
vation last ?

Neither men nor Angels can positively *Resp. 1.*
determine the time how long : it is one
of the secrets which belong to God, to
know times and seasons ; as he hath hidden
the day of death which puts an end to our
lives from our knowledge, that we should
live every day as if every day were our last ;
so hath he hidden the knowledge of the
setting of the day of grace from our eyes,
that we should improve the present time ;
To day while it is called to day : Delayes are
full of danger ; men may lose their souls
for ever through delay ; it is every mans
duty to improve the present time.

2. Ministers are to hope that each mans
day of grace is as long as the day of his life ;
and so every particular man ought to hope
that his day of grace is as long as his life.
What though a man hath lived for many
years unfruitfully under the means of
grace ! yet his day may not be past and

R 4

gone :

gone : See it in this figg-tree ; God came three years seeking fruit, and found none, yea threatned to cut him down ; yet his day was not past, for you see another year was added, and more means of conversion were to be used to make him fruitfull.

3. As long as God continues the means of grace, there is hope : as long as the Vine-dresser used digging and dunging there was hope, and the day of grace was not gone ; Yea, let me lay down this rule, As long as the word cometh in any power to thy heart ; as long as the spirit of grace doth in any measure strive with thy heart, yet thou hast some motions and excitements, some convictions, some good purposes, thy day of grace, thy three years are not expired : but oh tis very sad with that man when the word is powerless, and the spirit of grace hath ceased to strive with him : it is sad when a mans heart is no more affected with the word of God Preached in power, then a dead man is affected with Thunder roaring in the ayr. I shall speak more to this in the following points.

CHAP. XV.

THese propositions being spoken of by way of explication, I shall now confirm my Doctrine with Reasons, that God will reckon with us for all the years of grace which pass over our heads.

Because they are Talents committed to us to improve to our Masters advantage: every Master calls his servants to account how they have improved what they gave them to improve: God will call all men to account for every Talent they have in their hands, what they have done for the glory of God, for Christ, for their souls. All our Talents are written down; our using, our abusing them; our improving, our hiding them; our spending, our mispending them: all the times of Gods patience, goodness and long sufferance are written down: all the mercies we have received, all the ordinances of God, all the Sermons we have heard, are written down in the book of Gods remembrance, and in the book of our consciences; we shall all be called to give an account, *Mat.* 25. 13, 16, 17, 18, 19. under the Parable of Talents Christ shews us how each man

man shall render an account of all his Talents. To some he gave five, to some two, to others but one: after a long time the Lord of the servants cometh and reckoneth with them, saith the Text. So likewise under the Parable of the unjust steward, Christ sheweth how God will reckon with every man, Luk. 16. 1. 2. *Give an account of thy Stewardship, for thou maist be no longer steward:* here Christ calls all to give an account of their time, for they shall have time no more to employ: to give an account of their riches and mercies, for they shall enjoy them no more; to give an account of the means and seasons of grace, for they shall enjoy them no more. Oh consider, that there are no such Talents, as the time and means of grace are: these are mostly to be improved; the mispending of these are most dangerous: men shall give an account, how they have mispent their riches, their honours: Magistrates shall give an account, Ministers shall give an account, and Masters, all shall give an account for their Talents; every one shall come to a strict account for the times and means of grace enjoyed, of Sabbaths, of Ordinances, of Sermons, because these are the best Talents,

lents, and the poor as well as the rich have them to bring glory to God, Talents pertaining to the salvation of their souls.

For the greater and clearer conviction *Reas. 2.* of men; how God will stop every mans mouth, and all wicked men shall be *αὐτοκτάται*, self-judges, self-condemners, laying all the fault of their condemnation on themselves, acknowledging themselves worthy to become the fuel of hell fire: when the great God shall say to us, What could I have done more for your conversion and salvation then I have done? I gave you a space to repent, and you repented not; I gave you a day of grace, and you received my grace in vain; I gave you all means of grace, you had all mine ordinances: and all means prevailed not with you to look after Holiness; I gave you a day of Salvation, and you would not work out your Salvation, but all the day long did you work out your own damnation: How many Sabbaths did I give you, but you profaned them, you were weary of them? some of them you played away, some you drank away, some you walke away, some you slept away: you neglected to keep them, you would stay away from mine ordinances upon any slight occasion.

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How many Ministers did I send to you to warn you to repent, and you made light of them and their warning; yea, instead of receiving them as my Messengers, you mocked them, despised and misused them! How many of those precious Sermons that have been Preached to you, have been passed away like tales that are told! you have forgotten how many Sermons you have heard, but you shall find them all written on your consciences, and shall remember them all; for God will bring all to your remembrance, that at such a Sermon this sin was sharply reprov'd, at such a Sermon that sin was reprov'd, my pride, my drunkenness, &c. but I reformed not, repented not, that will be the answer of thy Conscience in that day. — How many good motions, good purposes, good resolutions did my Spirit stir up in your souls, will the Lord say, but you soon stifled them, quenched and resisted them! God will not forget, but all shall be objected against you, and you shall remember, how at such a time, in such a place of such a Sermon, you found the spirit of God striving with you, coming powerfully on your hearts; but then wilt thou cry out, ah! woe is me, all was in vain: when this day

day of reckoning shall come, God will so fully, so clearly convince them, that all condemned malefactors shall cry out to the glory of Gods righteous judgement, that they themselves are the causes of their own eternal perdition : then shall we every one say ; ah ! woe unto me, I have damned my self to these intolerable flames.

Because God will have Angels and Saints *Reas. 3.* who shall come with him to judge the world, to see that his judgements are righteous, that he doth no iniquity to any soul whom he damns to hell ; and all shall then approve of his judgement of condemnation of them : then All shall see what a gracious God he was to them : see how much he tendered their salvation, in giving them such a time, such means of conversion and repentance ; how often he would have gathered them under his wings, but they would not : Then God will say to his chosen people ; Oh my Saints ! These men had the same Sabbaths, the same means of grace and conversion that you had ; they had as long a day of grace as you had ; what I did for you, I did for them in an external way, and yet they repented not : therefore be ye judges O my dear Children, whether their destruction be not from themselves.

CHAP. XVI.

SECT. 1.

Use 1.

Will God reckon with us for all the dayes and years of grace and salvation we have had ? oh then let us all be exhorted to deferr and put off repentance no longer, but to day, while it is called to day, humble your selves under the mighty means of grace, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; lift up the doors of your hearts, that the King of glorious state may come in, bringing salvation. Whiles God offerech Salvation, receive it ; Gods time of offering, is our time of receiving : while God warns you to repent, see that you do repent, delayes are dangerous ; it hardens you more and more, and shuts you up in greater impenitency ; take Gods counfel, despise not his reproofs ; let every one of us press our backward hearts with these following considerations.

1. Consider how long we have stood in the Vineyard of the Lord barren and fruitless : he hath come for many years (perhaps these ten, twenty, thirty, forty years) seeking fruit, and he hath found

none :

one; say to thy self, tis time now for me
to bring forth fruit: now it is high time
for me to repent.

2. Consider what a shameful thing it is to
stand in Gods Vineyard so long as many of
you have been, and to have done God no
better service then you have done: say ye
now to your selves, ah! I have lived
these twenty or forty years and more, and
have grieved my God, serving my base
lusts, and have done no service for God!
Shall not I now serve him? Shall not I
now live to him, and bring forth fruits un-
to him? Is not God a better Master than
lusts and Devils are? Can they reward me
with Heaven as God can?

3. We all resolve to bring forth fruit
some time or other: there is not a man
but is resolved to repent some time or
other: you all resolve to seek God, to
ask for mercy: some time must be set
apart for it: Then do it now, to day while
thou art called to day: There is no time yours
but the present: the time past is irrevoc-
ably gone: the time to come is uncertain:
who can tell what to morrow will bring
forth? perhaps death, damnation: only
the time present is your time: this hour
thine: let this very Sermon, this very

Exhortation

Exhortation move thee to bring forth fruits to day.

4. Consider that every thing is on the wing; grace is on the wing, mercy is on the wing, the Gospel is on the wing, thy time is on the wing; and if once they fly away, they like the Raven will never return more into your Ark; we do not know how suddenly they will take their wings and fly away; our times are in Gods hand, and when he lifts up his hand, and saith, Time shall be no more, then the time of grace, of mercy, of repentance shall be no more; then you may begg, call, cry, weep, wring your hands, and be ready to offer a thousand rivers of oyl, and the cattle on a thousand hills to redeem these times, but then you cannot, you shall not have them.

5. Consider that account must be given; but oh it is impossible for any man to give up his account with joy, that shall let it go without doing God service, and bringing forth fruit to his glory, and the salvation of his own soul. Shame, confusion and horreur will fall in such abundance on thee, O negligent soul, when thou shalt be brought to an account; then will thy mouth be stopped, when God shall put thy soul to this question: How hast thou spent

spent the three years of grace and salvation which I gave thee to bring forth fruit? no profane person can speak one word in excuse of himself.

6. Notwithstanding your unfruitfulness to this day, yet if you will now bring forth fruit unto God, and glorifie him by your repenting and believing, the Lord will never upbraid you with all your former unfruitfulness, but pardon all, embrace you, love and reward you, as if you had been fruitful from the first day of your being planted in his Vineyard to this hour. You know the Parable of the labourers in Gods Vineyard; those that came in and laboured in his Vineyard about the eleventh hour of the day, received equal reward with them that came in the third hour, and laboured all the day besides in it.

This may be an use of terrour to all those who willingly and wilfully mispend their dayes and years of grace, and still please themselves in bringing forth wild grapes, to live in the customary practise of known sins; what ailes you that ye thus madly fit your selves for fuell for hell? What have ye no desires of Salvation? have ye no care of your souls? What do you

Use 2.

scorn Heaven and happiness ! What ! is sin better then grace, that you will bring forth the unfruitful works of darkness ? What is damnation better then salvation ? are lusts better then God that you neglect him ? if ever any shall call to rocks and mountains to cover them from the presence of Christ to whom they shall render an account, these are the men : these are the dry trees which shall burn in Hell most fiercely.

SECT. 2.

Use 3.

I Shall conclude with this Use of Instruction to you, that there are four times which God reckons upon, and will reckon with us for them.

1. His Sabbaths : the one day of every seven of our lives, the day which he hath commanded every one to keep holy, a day sanctified and blessed for the carrying on the work of salvation : Be ye assured O prophane Sabbath-breakers, that God will bring every man to give answer for the breach of it, for the neglect of it : a natural conscience cannot deny, but God will call him to an account for murder, theft, adultery, because they are the violations

lations of his commands: Is not the Sabbath sanctifying, his Commandment as well as the rest of the Commandments?

2. Every opportunity put into our hands of hearing the word of grace and salvation must be reckoned for; because then God holds forth the golden Scepter of grace; if Ministers are to preach in season and out of season, you must then hear them: Every opportunity of hearing a Sermon is a time wherein God may be found, wherein he calleth us to him: whensoever God is calling from heaven, be thou swift to hear: when God holdeth forth his hand, do not thou (as sluggards) fold thine arms in thy bosome.

3. Those dayes and times wherein you experimentally feel the word and spirit of God: then it is an high time to improve, when the word of God cometh to thee in power and demonstration of the Spirit, then is a time for thee to demonstrate thy repentance: we may say of such a time as *Jacob* of his dream, *Surely the Lord was in this place*, in this Sermon; but woe is me, I was not aware of it! God will reckon with men for neglecting such great opportunities of salvation.

4. Those times when thou findest thy
S 2 heart

heart in a melting, purposing, and yielding frame : Oh strike while thy Iron heart is thus made hot ! such a moment and time is better then a thousand other dayes wherein thou hearest the word, but thy heart is not moved ; the wisdom of Christians lies in observing and improving these opportunities : the not observing them brings oftentimes destruction on mens souls : it is for a lamentation, that men make no use of such seasons of salvation, Eccles. 9. 12. *For man knoweth not his time ; as the fishes that are taken in a net, and as Birds caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.*

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LUKE 13. 7.

Behold these three years, &c.

Serm. 13. Preached January 26. 1661.

CHAP. XVII.

THE next Doctrine which offereth
it self to our sad consideration,
shall be drawn from this word of
admiration, *Behold :*] as who should say :
Behold and Wonder, Behold and be Asto-
nished, that a figg tree of my own plant-
ing in my own Vineyard, should not bring
forth fruit for these three years ! that
men planted in my Church, that have such
means of grace and repentance should

continue for so many years graceless and impenitent ! Hence then I note ;

Observ.

That it will astonish any man who shall seriously consider what means of conversion wicked men have, that yet they continue impenitently wicked under all means.

We find Christ sometime marvelling at the unbelief of men, Mark 6. 6. *He marvelled because of their unbelief* ; for these very men were astonished at his wisdom which they heard, and at his mighty works which he had done : albeit they had such marvellous means of faith, yet they believed not, therefore Christ marvelled at their unbelief : sometimes Christ was grieved and angry at the hardness and unbelief of men under the means of grace. It is an usual thing in Scripture to call to heaven and earth, to be astonished at the wickedness of men, Isa. 1. 2. *Hear O Heavens, and give ear O Earth* : What is the thing that God summons heaven and earth to hearken to ? *The Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me : the Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Masters Crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider : Ah sinful Nation, a people*

a people laden with iniquity! as if he had said: O ye Heavens, and all ye glorious creatures: O earth and all creatures therein, be astonished at this people: I have been a tender Father to them, and have done what a good Father can do for them, yet they rebell against me: they have had all means of knowledge, yet they are more brutish, and more void of understanding then the Oxe or Ass, which are of all creatures the dullest; they know their Master, yet my people do not know me their God; they neither love me, fear me, nor obey me, they are full of all wickedness.

For these Reasons God summoneth his creatures to hearken.

1. Because hereby God declareth the deafness of men: inanimate creatures are more ready to hear the will of God, then men are to hearken to his invitations to repentance.

2. To shew to us, that all creatures which according to their manner are ready to hear and obey the commands of God, shall one day be so many witnesses against men that will not obey his commands to repent, Deut. 4. 6. *I call heaven and earth to witness against you.*

3. By the Tragical exclamations (so Ur-

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sin calls them) God would draw us to give more attention to his exhortations and invitations to repentance: it is as if he should say: All creatures if they could, would hearken unto me: Oh ye men that can hear, do ye therefore hear what the Lord saith.

CHAP. XVIII.

I Shall now shew what causes there are of wondering and being astonished at mens impenitency under the means.

I. Is it not a wonder that men who are so much instructed, and told of the filthiness of sin, of the dangerous effects and consequences thereof, and yet that men should live in sin, doth not the Scripture tell us, that sin makes us odious in the sight of God, as venomous Adders, as filthy Swine wallowing in the mire, as Dogs licking up their own vomit, are in mans eye? to see a man drink down poyson that knows it not, is no marvel: doth not the Spirit of God tell us, that sin is rebellion, enmity, hatred against God? that sin turns men into beasts, and brings all wrath upon man, temporal and eternal, all plagues and

and curses whatsoever? that it is, and will be the ruine and destruction of mens souls? is not this matter of astonishment? Who cannot but be astonished to behold men to live and wallow in sin, to go on in soul-polluting and in soul-destroying courses, as confidently as the Swine of the *Gadarens* did into the Sea? Is it not matter of wonder, that Hell fire, the everlasting chains of darkness, and all the torments prepared for sinners should not affright them out of their sins?

2. Is it not for an astonishment, that men hearing what sentence of death and condemnation God hath passed on them, that they should not take Gods prescribed course to prevent the execution of these terrible sentences denounced by the mouth of God against them? if a Judge pass the sentence of death upon a man, and yet should shew him by what means he might escape execution: would not you marvel to see that man wilfully to neglect the means? or as if a Physitian should say to his Patient, you will certainly die of such a disease, if you take not this course to prevent it: how doth the word of God declare to us, that we are children of Gods wrath, heirs of Hell, that the
wrath

wrath of God abideth on us, that we are condemned; that God will turn all the wicked into hell; that wicked men shall die in their sins; that we shall all perish if we repent not: that for many years men have been forewarned of damnation, yet they repent not to prevent it, but go on in treasuring up wrath as greedily as worldlings do their wealth: is not this matter of great astonishment?

3. Consider and then marvel, that God for a long space should use all moving arguments to bring men to repentance, that he should intreat and beseech them to receive his grace, and be reconciled to him, that he should draw them with cords of love, his mercies, his promises, draw men with the cords of anger, his threatenings and judgements; send his messengers rising early, calling and commanding men to repent, and that not once or twice, or for a day, but for many years (these three years saith the Text) yet no repentance; behold and wonder at it, O heavens, O earth: the *Ninevites* hearing but one Sermon calling them to repentance, they repented: but here are men who have heard hundreds, some thousands of Sermons warning them to repent, and yet

yet behold they repent not!

4. Is it not marvellous to behold men go on in impenitency against many evident and strong convictions that they must repent! there is scarce a man that liveth under the means of grace, and is invited to repent, but knows it is his duty, that he must repent of his sins and amend his life: how many are there who are so followed with powerful exhortations and strong reasons, and convictions, that it is high time for them to repent! yet these very men in contradiction to their own convictions, do go on in the hardness and impenitency of their hearts: be ye astonished O Heavens and Earth at the unfruitfulness of these men.

5. Marvel at it because of the reasonableness of the wayes of God: he requireth no more at our hands but what is good, holy, and just to be done, Rom. 7-12. *The commandment is holy, just, and good:* it is holy because it teacheth us to conform our hearts and lives to God: it is just because it commandeth nothing but what is just for us to do, to God, to our neighbours: it is good, because obedience thereunto makes us good: these are the fruits which God commandeth and approveth

vech of. Name any sin, and you cannot but acknowledge it is a just thing for us to eschew it : name any one duty, it is just for us to perform it : if there were any unreasonableness in the service of God, in obeying his commands, there were some excuse for men why they should not conform to his holy will.

6. Because all the profit of our bearing fruit is our own more then Gods: tis nothing to God whether we repent or not; what if thou art damned? the loss is *thine*, not *his*; what if thou art saved? the gain is not *his* but *thine*; what if ye go on in your wicked wayes? it is to your own destruction; *do they provoke me to anger*, saith the Lord, *Jer. 7. 19.* No wretches! *it is to the confusion of your own faces.* Do you by your impenitency vex me? no, you do but vex your selves, and are against your own souls; marvel at this that men should be such enemies to their own souls.

7. Is it not a marvel that any men should prefer the Devil and his service above God and his service, and count it a greater happiness to bring forth fruits to Devils, then to bring forth fruit to God? all impenitent persons do interpretatively say, that the Devil and their lusts are better masters then God.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

LET this in the first place be an Use *Use 1.*
 of Admonition to all that hear this,
 how God calls to all to wonder at mens
 impenitency under the means of grace;
 Oh let not God call to any to behold our
 impenitency any longer ! there are too
 many among us, of whom God hath too
 much cause to say, Behold these men, I
 have for three years sought the fruits of
 repentance from them, and find none :
 they have been many years warned, invited
 and commanded to bring forth fruit, yet
 bring forth none : Oh take heed lest God
 call to Angels, Saints, Creatures, behold my
 wrath, my vengeance on these men ; come
 behold and see how I will cut them down,
 and cast them into the fire : they who are
 now astonished at thy impenitency, shall
 be astonished at Gods wrath poured forth
 upon thee.

Be exhorted then speedily to bring *Use 2.*
 forth fruit, that God may say of thee, as
 he did of *Paul* to *Ananias*, Behold now
 he prayeth ; now he repenteth : That man
 that for these three years hath born no
 fruit, behold what precious fruit he now
 brings

brings forth ! That man that went on joyfully and wilfully in sin for a long time, Behold now how he mourneth, how he humbleth and abaseth himself : behold how he abhors sin ! behold how he gives himself to follow after holiness !

CHAP. XX.

I am now come to the dreadful threatening which God passeth on the impenitent ; *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ?*

I might handle several Doctrines arising from these words, but I purpose to insist mainly but upon one, leaving this cutting down, till I come to handle the last verse of this Parable.

Consider we the words as a sentence or threatening ; then this Point of Instruction offereth it self to our thoughts.

Obser. I. It is Gods usual way to threaten destruction, before he brings destruction on an unfruitful people.

God may come upon men suddenly and cut them down ; but he doth not, but layeth the axe to the tree, and threatens every tree

tree to stock it up, and cast it into unquenchable fire, *Matth. 3.* this lightning alwayes goes before the thunderbolt of judgement, sentence before execution.

He threatnerth, 1. That we may cast our selves down, that he may not cut us down: threatnings are his motives to repentance; he threatens what he will do in case we continue unfruitful, that he may excite us to do what we must do for preventing our own ruine: these threatnings will bring forth judgements, if we bring not forth fruit. *Qui non audit minas, tandem sentit ruinas*: he that will not hearken to threatnings, he shall in due time be made sensible of his irrecoverable destruction: the axe which is now laid, will be lifted up to cut us down

N. B.

That unfruitful persons must expect a cutting down. Men do cut down barren trees, and make of them fuel for the fire; so will the Lord do: see how the threatening runs, *Matth. 3. 10. Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewen down, and cast into the fire: Is cut down:]* it is not said, it shall be cut down, noting to us, that it is as certain, as if it were already done: Execution is as sure as sentence:

Obfer. 2.

tence : damnation is as sure as condemnation : I shall speak of this in the last verse , therefore now I must pass it by.

CHAP. XXI.

SECT. I.

I Come now to the Point that I will handle , which shall be drawn from these words, *Why cumbresth it the ground?*

Obfer. 3.

That unfruitful persons are unsufferable burdens. They are not only injurious to their own souls, but to others also, doing incredible wrong to others , as I shall make appear in these following particulars.

1. They are cumbersome to God himself : God speaks like one that is oppressed under a burden : Isa. 1. 4. *Ab sinful Nation !* Ah is an Interjection of sorrow : This sinful Nation , This sinful man , This obstinate Swearer , This swinish drunkard is a grief to my soul. So in ver. 14. *They are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them :* I am not able to suffer or endure them any longer : It is spoken of God after the manner of men, who are weary of bearing a cumbersome

cumbersome burden; in ver. 24. he saith,
Ab I will ease me of mine adversaries. Ab]

This particule of sorrow sheweth how cumbersome they are to God: I will ease me of my adversaries by avenging my self on them; as a man that is tired with a cumbersome burden, casteth it away from him; he will bear it no longer: so God saith, I will ease me of mine adversaries, I will destroy them, I will cut them down; those impenitent wretches shall be no more a trouble to me; they are so injurious to my patience, goodness, long sufferance, mercy, and abounding grace, that I cannot bear with them any longer; they are so injurious to my honor, that it is for my honor to bear with such fruitless and unprofitable wretches no longer. The Prophet *Amos* hath a notable expression, *Amos* 2. 13. *Behold I am pressed under you as a Cart is pressed that is full of sheaves*; it is a homely expression; yet being the expression of the Holy Ghost, we may use it: wicked men are as a heavy Cartload on the back of God.

2. They are cumbersome to Christ: they are injurious to his death, to his life, to his benefits, to his love in dying and tendering himself to us. See how angrily he

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speaks

speaks to his own disciples, because of their unbelief: and if he be angry with these green trees, which brought forth fruit in some measure, what shall he do to dry trees which bring forth none at all? *Mark*

9. 19 O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you, or bear you? What! doth he speak thus in anger to his believing disciples? how then doth he speak to unbelievers, to all impenitent sinners, to a faithless and impenitent generation, how long shall I suffer you, seeing you are a shame to me, a reproach to me, I am blasphemed through you and by you, how long shall I suffer you? though I bear with you long, yet I will not bear with you alwayes.

10. 5. They are unsufferable burdens to the Holy Ghost; they are they that grieve him, that quench him, that resist him; he is said to strive with them that he may make them to bring forth fruit: but they contradict him, and will bring forth wild grapes, unfruitful works of darkness, that he gives over striving with them, as one that is weary with striving: seeing you will not bring forth the fruits of the spirit, I will never strive more with you, and never shall you bring forth fruit: that tree is

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twice dead whom the spirit of God forsaketh.

SECT. 2.

AND as they are a burden to God, so likewise they are a burden to others.

1. They are a burden to Ministers, whose whole work is to make them fruitful. Oh the moans and complaints that the Prophets made ! Isa. 49. 4. *I have said* [I the Prophet, who am here a type of Christ, and Christ is understood by this (I) also.] *I have laboured in vain* : all my preaching to this obstinate and unfruitful people hath been in vain. *I have spent my strength in vain.*] I have wasted my time, spirits, vigor of body in preaching, but all is in vain : how may all Ministers take up this complaint ! So also the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Chap. 13. 17. if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret for your pride (1.) if you will be still obstinate and proud, and will not hearken to Gods word and obey it, then I will go apart and weep bitterly for your pride and obstinacy against God : peoples unfruitfulness is the sorrow of Godly Ministers : your mirth in sin is their sorrow of heart ; your roaring

ing in Ale-houses, makes them roar before the Lord for your sins: yea *Jeremiah* was tyred out with his peoples wickedness, that he purposed to preach no more to them, *Jer. 20. 8, 9. the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily: Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.*

2. They are a burden to the Church, to the Congregation, to the Towns and places where they live; they cumber the ground, saith my Text, the Vineyard, the earth where it standeth: for as I told you in the Explication, the word signifieth *terram sterilem reddere*: a barren fig-tree makes the earth about it barren: so do all impenitent wicked persons; they are they that bring judgements on the place where they live: for their unfruitfulness God in wrath removes Ministry and Gospel, and gives it to another Nation: it is for their wickedness under the Gospel that God turneth a Congregation, which is in respect of the means an *Eden*, a Paradise, into a Wilderness. Wicked men in the Church are as weeds in a Garden, or as Crab-trees, Briars and thistles in an Orchard; unprofitable burdens, vexations and griefs to the Gardiner.

SECT.

SECT. 3.

Moreover, they are cumbersome and injurious to every person near them, as a barren tree is injurious to all trees about him; as,

1. They are injurious to every godly man: how did the filthy conversation of the Sodomites vex the righteous soul of Job 2 Pet. 2. 8. That righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their ungodly deeds, their wickedness did torment him: it is a secret torment to a gracious soul to hear the swearings and blasphemies of wicked men among them: it is a torment to a pious soul to see the drunkenness and other abominable practices of men among whom they live.

2. They are injurious to all their relations and friends: ungodly friends are great impediments to their friends in the wayes of godliness and salvation. A wicked Father, or Master, or Husband, or Wife, are great hinderances to the salvation of their relations: many children had been better, had they had better Parents; many servants

had been better, had they better Masters: many Husbands and Wives, had been better, had they married in the Lord. A time will come that neer relations will curse one another, and be witnesses against each other: The child will cry out, I had been fruitful, had my Father been good: the Husband will cry out, I had been good, had not my Wife hindered me; the Wife, I had been a good Woman, had not my Husband hindered me in the ways of godliness.

3. They are very injurious to young Plants that stand neer them: when some hopes of conversion, of reformation in some men have appeared, how have wicked men by their ill counsel and advice pulled them up? What, you turn precise? What, you become a Sermon bearer? Will you lead a mopish life? Will you bid farewell to all delights and pleasures? Oh how have wicked men mocked and scoft some out of their good beginnings of reformation of life and manners?

4. They are injurious to one another's souls: they make one another more unfruitful, more wicked; they harden and encourage one another in wickedness.

they

they harden one another against God and his wayes of godlines: such is the devilish wickedness of some men in the Church of Christ, that they will tempt, perswade all men to be as wicked as themselves, and had rather see men to be any thing, rather then to be godly.

CHAP. XXII.

LEARN hence the admirable patience Use 1.
of God in his suffering wicked men to live so long in the Church? O what just cause hath God to cut them down speedily, to ease himself of such who are adversaries to him, and to the souls of others! they are a burden to God! Lord! why dost thou not cut them down? they are injurious to the souls of all others. Lord! why dost thou not cut them down? It is because God is patient to such, and will warn them of damnation that they may repent, and flee from it, before he damne them to hell. It is the patience of the Gardiner, that he suffers barren trees to stand in his Orchard, or weeds to grow in his Garden.

2. Let those be admonished hence, who
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have any care of their souls eternal welfare, not to delight in, but to avoid the company of such who are injurious to their own souls welfare: wicked men will hinder you from bringing forth fruit: it is a thousand times better for you to say to wicked men, depart from me, or I will depart from your society or friendship; I will not know you any more: you are injurious to my souls salvation; then that Christ should say to you, depart from me, I know you not: you are and have been unfruitful in my Vineyard, be ye therefore cast into hell fire.

3. Be exhorted to love and frequent such mens society, as will not for a world be cumbersome to thy soul, but will do what they can to help forward thy salvation: let barren trees stand by themselves; let fruitful trees be by themselves: what Christ said, the same do thou say, He that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother, and Friend, and All: they will provoke thee to every good work, they will say, come, let us go unto the house of the Lord, for he will teach us his ways.

4. Let me advise every one that bear-

eth

eth fruit, to resolve to go on in the wayes of godliness, to abound in these fruits: peremptory resolution is necessary for all the godly; for there are more unfruitful trees than fruitful: here is more to cumber us then to help us, in the way of salvation. I wish I could not say, there are twenty that will further you to Hell, to one that will help you to heaven: twenty discourage you from holiness, to one that will excite you to godliness: it is sad to consider how Gods Vineyard everywhere is full of barren trees.

5. This may be for terror to all such of whom God saith, yea Ministers and any discerning Christian may say also; why doth this or that man cumber the ground? All ye prophane drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, ye are they that cumber the ground; you are now a burden to God; the time is at hand, when God will be a burden to you, and cumber you, as now you cumber him: you may read in Scripture of *the burden of the Lord, the burden of the Lord*; (so his threatnings, wrath and judgements are called) this burden will fall upon you; this burden will break you to pieces when it falleth; this burden will be as cumber some as a millstone about your

necks, and drown you in perdition and destruction : Oh what cumbersome burdens will fall upon you ! and this is the aggravation of them , no man by his strength shall ever be able to shake or cast them off from his shoulders : all your sins will be a burden too heavy for your souls to bear. The wrath of God will lye and abide upon you, it will be a burden too heavy for you to bear : The abuse of Gods patience and your unfruitfulness under the means will be a burden too heavy for you to bear. This is the doleful lamentation of the damned : Oh, woe unto us ! how are we cumbered in hell, and must and shall bear this burden to eternity !

Luke



LUKE 13. 8.

*And he answering said unto him, Lord,
let it alone this year also, till I shall
digg about it, and dung it.*

Serm. 14. Preached February 2. 1661.

CHAP. XXII.

IN this and the preceding verse we may behold as it were a conflict between Gods justice and mercy, his patience and anger about unfruitful persons. In the verse foregoing you hear the justice and wrath of God thundering in the Heavens against impenitent persons: *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* let not the axe be laid to the root of the unfruitful

fruitful figg-tree only, but cut it down, stock it up root and branch, and cast it into the fire; these unfruitful and impenitent wretches are good for nothing else, but to be the fuel of hell fire: they cumber the ground, they take up room in my Church, and keep out others who would bring forth better fruit.

Now in this verse the mercy and patience of God intercedes, layes hold upon the hand of wrath and justice, making this intercession, *Lord, let it alone this year also*: Lord, do not yet cut it down: peradventure this unfruitful tree may yet be made fruitful with a little more cost and pains: Lord, let these impenitent persons live a little longer under the means of grace; peradventure they may be led to repentance: try them but one year more. The Ministers of my word shall labour their repentance, and shall spend their strength, in praying for them, in preaching to them; who can tell but they will yet bring forth fruits pleasing to the Lord of the Vineyard? this is the scope of these words.

Yet let us take a fuller view of the words; The Vine-dresser useth two arguments to moderate the rigour of enraged justice.

I. The

1. The first is drawn from himself: *Let it alone this year, till I shall digg about it and dung it.*

2. The other argument is drawn from the tree: if more time, patience and means of grace will not, and shall not make it fruitful, *then cut it down*, then cast it into Hell fire.

But it may be demanded, *What is this Quest. digging and dunging?*

Christ compareth the application of *Resp.* means of grace to the labour and cost of Husbandmen and Gardiners, who open the earth about the roots of the trees, and lay in dung to make them to bear fruit. Christ by his Ministers diggeth about them, when they sharply reprove them, powerfully convince them, even to the pricking of their consciences by terribly threatning them, by their pathetical exhortations and admonitions; lastly, by sending some sharp afflictions to humble them, to affright them. — He is said also to dung them by multiplying and continuing his mercies, benefits, blessings, which as dung fattens the earth for fruit-bearing: so should the mercies and blessings of God which are new every morning, make us to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE point I will handle from these words shall be this.

Obfer.

Howbeit men are for a long while unfruitful under the means of grace, and deserve a cutting down, yet God is pleased to give them more time and means of grace to make them fruitful.

I will not propose to you instances drawn from Scripture, seeing in every congregation we have very many evident and living instances to bear witness to this truth : how many of us have stood and (it is a sad word that I must speak) do still stand unfruitful in the Lords Vineyard ! how do many of us deserve a cutting down, a casting into hell ? how many are there among us who daily bring forth the wild grapes of drunkenness, swearing, and the like unfruitful works of hellish darkness ! though many among us do persist in their detestable vices and practices to this day ; yet still you have Sabbaths, ordinances, the means of grace, and Christ by his Ministers is still labouring your conversion, reformation and Salvation ; not a drunkard, not a swearer this day but is a living instance
of

of this truth ; and must say, yet God lets me alone this week, this month, this year, to this day, and I am not cut down and cast into hell.

That we may the better perceive how patient and long-suffering God is to unfruitful persons, I will first propote some things to your consideration.

God might in justice have cut every one down as soon as we were born ; *dāmnati antequā nati*, saith *Augustine* : we deserved damnation before we were born : we are all dead trees at the root from our conception and birth, fit for nothing but to be fuel for Hell : there was (according to our natures) no probable hopes that ever we should bear any other fruit then wild grapes, yet God hath let us alone for many years. *Prop. 1.*

God might have suffered such briars and thorns as we are by nature, to have stood in the wast howling wilderness of the world : we see that in his unsearchable wayes of justice many millions are suffered by him to stand in this forlorn estate, whose end is to be burned : yet God hath not dealt so severely with us, but hath let us in his Vineyard : we have the mighty means of conversion and gracious fruitfulness. *Prop. 2.*

fulness which they have not, and never shall have. That is as true of us and them which Christ said of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* : *if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Zidon which were done in you ; if the mighty means of salvation had been given them ; had they been trees planted by Gods Rivers side as we are, they had brought forth the fruits of repentance long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* The having of the means of grace is no common, but a rich peculiar distinguishing mercy ; Oh what compassion hath God on our souls ! yet unfruitful we are, and so we stand to this day.

Prop. 3.

It is good to consider what we have done all this while that we have stood in the Vineyard under the mighty means of conversion : what fruit have we brought forth ? Are not many of us as the Prophet *Hosea* saith of *Israel*, *empty Vines, bringing forth fruit to our selves, not to God ?* or rather, as the Prophet *Isaiah* saith, *we are wild Vines, bringing forth wild stinking Grapes* : all this while we go on in pride, formality, hypocrisie, profaneness, impenitency, provoking God to the confusion of our own souls : all this while we have been treasuring up sins and
wrath

wrath to the great dishonour of the Gospel, yet God hath not cut us down, but lets us stand this year also, even to this very day: Oh behold and admire the patience of God toward unfruitful men.

Consider what an horrible abuse we offer *Prop. 4.* to the patience of God and his grace tendered to us; there is no sorer and speedier provocation to wrath than contempt and abuse of grace and mercy; yet thus have many done, turning the grace of God into wantonness, abounding in sin, because his grace aboundeth in the Gospel toward them, hardening and heartning themselves in their wicked courses, because God lets them alone, and cuts them not down, Eccles. 8. 11. *Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil;* as if he had said; They hear the justice of God declaring his word against sinners; the justice of God passeth the sentence of death and damnation upon them, *Cut them down,* Why do these men *cumber the ground?* now because God delayeth the execution of this righteous sentence, letting them alone for this year and that year, digging about them and dunging them as in former times,

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therefore they are bent to all wickedness and profaneness; yet notwithstanding all this abuse God still lets them alone, and cuts them not down.

Prop. 5.

Consider how wilfully wicked many people are, and how wilfully ignorant others are, under all former means of knowledge and holiness: it may be for a lamentation to think how many may hear, and will not hear the word; they shut their eyes, and stop their ears, that the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ should not shine into their hearts, whose hearts speak within, and their practices without openly declare, *Depart, we desire not the knowledge of thy wayes, we desire not the knowledge of Christ, faith, repentance, holiness; we desire not the knowledge of Gods wayes to Heaven and happiness.*

Again others there are (and I know not which number is the greater) that are wilfully wicked and profane, who knowingly and willingly imprison the Divine truths of Salvation in their unrighteous hearts, *Rem. 1. 18.* that is, albeit many men have the knowledge of saving truths, and are under powerful convictions, yet they willingly walk in contrary wayes to what they know, and say with them, in

Jer.

Jer. 44. *As for the word of the Lord, we will not do it, but we will do whatsoever cometh out of our own mouths:* are there not many knowing and wilfull swearers and drunkards among us, that know these sins, and that they that do such things are worthy of death, yet they do these sins, and take pleasure in all them that do the same sins; and yet God lets alone these men for this year also!

Consider, that about many (if not most of us) God hath digged with the spade of afflictions and judgements: So *Chemnitius* expoundeth this digging and dunging, of Gods sending of afflictions and sicknesses, by which he gives them some forecasts of his wrath; he doth as it were shew them hell and judgement; he puts men into the fear of death and hell; then they cry and pray to God as here the Vine-dresser doth; *Lord, let me alone this year also:* let me live a little longer, I will amend, I will not live as formerly; I will shun evil company and evil courses, I will hear the word, and pray more, and live better; and God remembering them in their low condition, saith, Let them alone another year, spare cutting them down, and casting them into the pit: These ve-

Prop. 6.

*Chemnit.
ad loc.*

ry same men perform not their sick bed vows, prove unfruitful, and God suffereth them to stand still; here is the admirable patience of God.

Prop. 7.

Consider how long God hath let them alone already, perhaps these three years as in my Text, perhaps twenty, or thirty, or forty years, perhaps for more years: duration of time doth wonderfully aggravate the patience of God, and their sin of impenitency; will any Gardiner wait too long for a trees fruit? will any Prince in the world wait and expect so long a time the return and repentance of a Rebel? yet God is pleased to let men alone another year also, waiting and expecting their conversion.

Prop. 8.

God is pleased to wave and pass by all this, and to continue the use of the means of grace for a longer space, charging all his Ministers as they will answer God, to digg still about these trees, and to dung them: Go still, Preach the Word in season and out of season; still exhort, perswade and intreat them in season and out of season; still pray for them, neglect no opportunity, slack no means, but labour in the word and doctrine; spend your strength to turn these poor sinners from the power of sin and Satan to the living God. CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

The Reasons of the Doctrine.

THE first reason of this point is, be. Reason 1.
 I cause hereby God sheweth the infinite disproportion between him and man: by this he sheweth himself to be God and not man, a God of great kindness, slow to anger: God will have all his wayes and actions answer his name and titles: his name is long-suffering, so are his wayes to sinners full of long-suffering: his name is Good, full of kindness, so are his wayes to sinners; his name is Full of Pity and Compassion, so are his wayes and actions to sinners: in a word, he is God and not man; so his patience and forbearance to sinners is infinitely beyond the patience of men; there are but drops of patience in men, God is a boundless Ocean: in men are but sparks, God is a Sun of infinite patience. The Lord saith, Hosea 11. 7, 8, 9. *My people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him,* ver. 7. These words shew the obstinacy and impenitency of men; *they are bent to*
 U 3 *backsliding*

backsliding : they are continually turning and revoking from me. *They called them to the most High* : (1.) They were called upon by the Prophets to turn to God, but none of them would give him the glory of their repenting. In *verse 8.* God saith, *How shall I give thee up to Ephraim ? how shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim ?* as who should say, This people deserveth to be cut down, as I overthrew *Admas* with fire and brimstone ; they are as deserving of destruction as the worst of sinners. In *ver. 9.* he saith, *My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together, I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger ; for I am God, and not man.* These words do shew Gods infinite patience and forbearance to them, his unwillingness to cut them down : Though this people deserve destruction, yet my bowels are moved within me, I will not execute my wrath ; for I am God and not man : I am God who can moderate my wrath, and not man who is peevish and froward, with whom there is but a word and a blow ; I am God of infinite patience, and not man who hath but a dram of patience in him : I am God of infinite compassion, and not man whose compassions are little.

Oh

Oh thou that dost daily go on in thy abominable provocations of God; therefore thou art not destroyed, because he is a God whom thou provokest to anger, and not man; he lets drunkards alone for this year and that year, though they add drunkenness to thirst, and Oath to Oath, because he is God and not man: the meekest of men cannot endure such vile provocations, but their wrath would break out against them.

Because of the Vine dressers mediation; Reason 2.
it is upon the account of Christ who is the Vine-dresser, that wicked men have a space of repentance, and the means of grace continued to them: you read this in my Text, *He answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also*: our first rebellion forfeited all: God in justice might have proceeded against us, and sent us roaring to Hell, without giving us a space of life and a space of repentance, had not Christ come between sinful men and an angry God; had not he interceded, Lord, let them alone, let them live; be patient, forbear cutting them down; I will lay down my life, and purchase pardon and life, and will tender them my death and merits: I will send out Ministers to call them to repentance,
U 4 and

and faith in my blood ; I will labour their conversion : Lord, do thou but set them alone, I will do all this : God for Christs sake lets us alone, and for his sake gives and continues the means of grace among a people.

This may give an answer to that great question, Whether Christ died for all men? seeing the life of men is part of Christs purchase, the dayes and years of patience which all enjoy are parts of Christs purchase, more especially the means and space of repentance, the ordinances, the Ministry are Christs purchased gifts ; as to these things Christ died for all men: that life, that space and means of repentance ; those extraordinary gifts which *Judas* had were the price of Christs blood for him, and in this sence he died for *Judas* as for *Peter*. There is not a wicked man but is obliged to give thanks to Christ for all the good that he hath ; it is for Christs sake that thou hast the Sabbaths, that thou hearest this Sermon, and hast thy life lengthened out to this very day.

Reason 3.

Because God will have all men to see that the death of sinners is not his delight ; tis your conversion he desireth, your repentance he delighteth in, Ezek. 33. 11.

As

As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: wherefore turn ye, turn ye from your evil wayes: for why will ye die, O house of Israel! God sweareth to it, we may therefore give all credit to him; tis evident he delighteth in the conversion, and not in the destruction of sinners: he would never be so patient and long suffering and good to sinners, if he took pleasure in their death: how easie a thing is it with God to tumble them down to the bottom of destruction? how suddenly could he turn their bodies into dust, and their souls into hell, did he delight in their death! Why doth God give us all a space to repent? why doth he call us to repentance? Why doth he give us all means to lead and bring us to repentance? Why doth he send out his Ministers to exhort and intreat us to repent? Why doth he make such offers of grace and mercy to us? Why doth he so pathetically call from Heaven to us to turn from our evil wayes? Why doth he let us alone this year also? All this demonstrateth, that God taketh no pleasure in our destruction, but in our conversion: the great God would never make such low condescensions and large offers

offers to us, if he delighted in our death. As soon as that word is out of his mouth, [Cut him down, let him not cumber the ground] down we should fall, and he would not let us alone one day longer, and we should not hear one Sermon more : therefore if ye are cut down, you shall see that your destruction is from your selves.

Reas. 4.

Because some are brought to fruitfulness and repentance by Gods letting them alone for one year more ; though many perish through their own willfulness and obstinacy, and will never bring forth fruit, though God should suffer them to stand in his Vineyard many years longer ; yet some are led to repentance, some are drawn to God ; some trees do bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; God hath some souls among the profane off-scouring of the world, which through his patience shall be brought to repentance by the means of grace. This reason the Apostle gives of Gods long-sufferance, 2 Pet. 3. 9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* (1.) Not willing that any of his elect

elect should perish, but that all of them should come to repentance : therefore he gives them time, space, and means of grace to bring them to repentance.

CHAP. XXVI.

LET us all be exhorted to improve this Use 1.
present day and time of grace : we have been unfruitful for a long time, the sentence is passed against us, Cut them down, let them not cumber the ground. Yet God hath let us alone this year also, yet we live and do enjoy the mighty means of grace, yet God calls upon us to bring forth fruit : yet God is expecting and waiting for our conversion, crying to us from Heaven in his word, *How long ! when shall it once be ?* let thy heart Eccho to God now this day, this hour ; say now, Lord give me repentance, and I will repent ; Lord now convert me, and I will turn : now Lord draw me, and I will run after thee : Oh that there were these meltings of heart within us ! Oh that there were such motions, such pantings of soul in us ! Oh that there were in us shame for our long unfruitfulness, and a purpose to bring forth

forth fruit ! I beseech you, let these considerations sink into your hearts ;

1. Perhaps your three years are expired, and this present year is the superadded year, this present year is the fruit of Christs intercession, for your last tryall whether you will bring forth fruit or no : these perhaps are some of the last Sabbaths, some of the last Sermons, and some of the last Exhortations and invitations that you shall have to repentance : You have disappointed Gods expectation for the space of three years ; do not now disappoint him this last year of thy visitation : *Is it a small thing to weary men ? will you weary my God also ?* Isa. 7. 13. it is no small sin to weary Gods faithful Ministers, but what a sinne is it to weary God himself ?

2. Consider that your last year of grace may be now expiring ; this may be the last month, week, or day of this super-added year : the last year or day of thy visitation ; it may be this may be the last Sabbath, the last Sermon, the last Call that thou shalt have to repent ; it is extream madness and folly for any man to delay to repent for a day : to neglect an opportunity, which probably you may never have
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the like again, is folly with a witness; so likewise to neglect a certain time, presuming on an uncertain time; to neglect the present time which is certain, for the future which is very uncertain, is madness in the utmost degree.

3. Are we not ashamed of our former unthankfulness to God, for the great space of repentance and means of grace which he hath for many years vouchsafed to us? will any of us be so brutish as to continue our unthankfulness this year also? Is not the time past sufficient which we have spent in bringing forth wild Grapes? Have we not turned abundance of grace into wantonness? Have we not despised very rich patience already? Have we not too often received the grace of God in vain? Have we not made light of all the offers of mercy? Think upon these things, and say, Shall I go on in the hardness and impenitency of my heart? it is high time for me to bring forth fruit, to be serviceable to my God.

4. Consider, That when this year which God superadds to the other three years is expired, then no more, not another year is to be expected: we know not when this superadded year will be expired, for God keeps

keeps the Almanack of the year of grace; men cannot see how far it is gone, how nigh to the end; when this year is come to an end, it will be in vain to expect that God will let thee stand another year: you may beg and cry and pray for another year, but your Prayers will be in vain: the Vine-dresser will not beg for a day more: he will not say, This mans fourth year is expired, Lord let him alone one year more: his resolve is to intercede no more for him; if he will not bring forth fruit this year, then Lord Cut him down, cast him into hell fire.

5. The larger space of repentance God gives you, if you bear not fruit; you will bring forth more wrath for your selves: if you do not improve this year to treasure up grace and mercy against the day of mercy, then you treasure up wrath against the day of wrath; then it will be better that you had never had this year also, and that God had cut you down long ere now; the more patience you have abused, the more wrath shall be poured on you: you will then wish, Oh that I had been cut down as soon as I was born! Oh that I had never stood one day in the Vineyard! Oh that I never had Sabbaths, Sermons,

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means of grace, and space to repent ! it is now the aggravation of the sin and torment of *Judas*, that he had such means of grace, and received the grace of God in vain.

6. How inexcusable wilt thou be, that dost wilfully stand out against all Gods patience, and all the invitations thou hast had to repentance ! Who shall plead for thee ? What excuse canst thou make, when God shall say to thee, I planted thee in my Vineyard, I gave thee three years for a space to bring forth fruit ! Yea I gave thee a further space, and used more means to make thee fruitful, but thou didst not bring forth fruit ; Oh how will thy mouth be stopped ! then shalt thou acknowledge that thy destruction is from thy self.

CHAP. XXVII.

THis may inform us what is the reason *Use 2.*
 why God-provoking sinners, whose sins cry loud for vengeance are suffered to live and to enjoy Sabbaths and ordinances, and many mercies from God ; here is the reason, God is pleased to make trial of them, whether they will at last repent or
 no :

no : he hath a desire of their conversion and salvation, he hath no pleasure in their destruction ; wherefore he invites them to convert, *Turn ye, Turn ye* : he doth ingeminate the exhortation, to shew how earnestly he willetb their conversion and salvation : therefore when thou seest wicked men go on in high provocations, and God hath not cut them down, say not thou in thy heart, Lord, how canst thou behold these men and their wickedness, and not lift up thine axe and cut them down ! but rather magnifie the patience of God toward them.

Use 3.

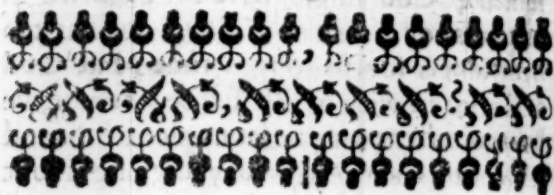
Hence you may see what just cause God hath to damn sinners to eternity : it is because they sin *in seculo aeterno* : should God add year to year, should he let them alone for ever, they would sin for ever, and never would bring forth fruit ; because men have in them an eternal bent to sin, therefore God punisheth them for this reason (among others) to eternity.

Use 4.

What cause have we to be thankful to God, for lengthening out the day and year of grace to us, for his continuance of the means of grace and salvation to this hour ! God might have dealt with us as with the lapsed Angels, damn us as soon as we sinned :

sinned ; God might have cut us down in our infancy ; or cut us down for our unfruitfulness for so long a time ; but God deals not so with us : Blessed be his name, we have another year ; he let us alone still, and his servants are to this day digging about us, and dunging us, using all labour and means to make us bring forth much fruit to our God, for the eternal welfare of our immortal souls.

Hence let fruitful trees learn that the *Use 5.* longer they live, they are to grow in grace, to bring forth more fruit. We must be bringing forth fruit in our season, *Psalm 1.* All times are a Christians season ; he that doth not grow in grace, hath no grace : painted trees do not grow ; God expecteth a proportionable growth : if we have five Talents, we must improve them to ten ; the more fruit we bring forth, the better it will be for us in the great day of recompence.



LUKE 13. 9.

And if it bear fruit, Well : and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Serm. 15. Preached February 9. 1661.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THese words are another argument of the Vine-dresser, moving the Lord of the Vineyard to forbear awhile the cutting down of the barren figg-tree. As the first is drawn from the Vine dressers further diligence and labour to make it bear fruit ; This is drawn from the Tree it self ; it is as if he had said ; it may

may be this tree may yet bring forth fruit : this impenitent person may yet be led to repentance, and if he shall at the last repent, it is well on all hands ; then thou wilt never repent of forbearing him so long, and I shall never repent of my labour to make him to bear the fruit of repentance. But if this unfruitful tree, this wicked and impenitent person shall not after all thy forbearance and my labour, bring forth fruits meet for repentance, then I will never open my mouth more in his behalf, never shall any more intercession be made for him, but let thy wrath break in upon him ; Cut him down, and cast him into unquenchable fire. In the words we have two particulars.

1. Here is mercy promised to the repenting sinner : *If it bear fruit, Well.*

2. Wrath and misery threatned, and that shall be certainly executed on the impenitent ; *If not, then after that cut it down.* I shall now handle the doctrine that lyeth in the former part of the words.

If after all unfruitfulness, and impenitency for a long while, a man shall at the last bring forth fruits meet for repentance, it shall be well on all sides. *Obser.*

Oh thou that hast mispent a great age
X 2 under

under the means of grace in all manner of prophanity; thou who hast been an habitual and customary swearer and drunkard from thy youth to old age, do thou now repent, all thy wickedness shall be forgotten and forgiven; God will never upbraid thee with thy rebellious curses, he will not give thee an angry word, but will embrace thee in his arms, kiss thee, wash thee in the blood of his Son, robe thee with his Sons righteousness, love and delight in thee, as if thou hadst been a tree alwayes bearing fruit.

For proof of this point, consult Jer. 3.1. *They say if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another mans, shall he return unto her again? shall not the Land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the Harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me saith the Lord.* Here God under the Parable of a disloyal Wife to her Husband, and of his utter rejection of her for her disloyalty, sheweth that he will not do so: *Though thou hast plaid the Harlot with many Lovers:* that is, Though thou hast been an Idolater, a shameless Apostate: yet if thou wilt repent and return to me, it shall be well with thee: I will receive thee notwithstanding all thine abominations.

nations. And in *ver* 12. he saith, *Go, and proclaim these words, and say, Return thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful; saith the Lord; as who should say, make proclamation to all impenitent sinners, invite them to repent, and assure them that it shall be well with them; I will not be angry with them; I will not so much as look upon you with an angry and scornful countenance, but will shew all favour and mercy to you.*

In *Matth.* 20. from the 1. to the end of *ver.* 6. he sheweth under another Parable, that it shall be well with every one that shall come in to Christ at the last: for *ver.* 6. he calls men in the last hour of the day: and albeit they had stood idle all the day long, yet if they would work but this one hour in the Vineyard, it should be as well with them as with those that had born the heat and burden of the day. All shall be as well with old sinners, that have stood all the day long in their impenitency and wickedness, if they repent, as with those who repented early, even in the day of their youth. How well was it with the Prodigal repenting and returning to his Father, after he had spent all his time and

Luke 15.

24.

estate upon Harlots, upon his lusts ! his Father kissed him, embraced him, rejoiced over him: *This my Son was dead, and is alive again.* My Son was a profane, vile, and wicked wretch, he stunk like a dead carrion in the nostrils of God and good men; but now he is alive, he repents of all his wickedness: how well was it then with him ? His Father called for the Ring and the Robe for him, and feasted him; God thinketh no mercy too great or too good for repenting sinners, whensoever they repent and turn to him.

CHAP. XXIX.

SECT. I.

IN prosecution of this point, I shall first shew how it is well on all sides.

I. It is well for the Lord of the Vineyard in two respects.

1. It is well for God, when a sinner repenteth, and bringeth forth spiritual fruit: for albeit our repentance can contribute nothing to Gods blessedness, nothing can be added to his infiniteness; whether we repent or not, God is infinitely happy;

yet

yet our repentance serveth for the illustration of the glory of his grace : oh how doth it shew forth the riches, the freeness, and efficacy of his grace in converting him, who to outward appearance seemed to be hopeless. It tenderth much to the praise of a Gardiner, who shall by his skill make a Tree fruitful, that was as it were dead ; it is much to the praise of the Husbandman, that shall by his pains and skill make a Wilderness to become a Paradise ; a barren Heath, to become a fruitful Field : even so, it is much to the praise of the glorious grace of God, when he shall by his word and spirit make a profane wretch, one that was a very Monster of impiety, to become Godly, Holy, Heavenly. Who would have said, that *Sarah* should have a Child in her old age ! who would have said that an old wicked wretch, an old drunkard, swearer, &c. should become an holy, mourning, repenting, and reformed Saint in his old age ! if ever any was ripe for Hell, this man was, yet now is he numbred among the Saints.

2. It is well for God, because it is a pleasure and delight to him to see sinners turn and live ; he desireth the conversion of sinners, and he delighteth in their conversion

version and Salvation : wherefore when they do turn, it is great joy to him. *There is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* The Prodigals repentance was his Fathers joy : My Son that was lost, is now found again : My Son that was dead, is alive again : My Son that was a rebell, is now obedient to me : He that was a slave to lusts and devils, is now become my Son again ; He that was an heir of Hell, is now an heir of Salvation. Thus doth God as it were rejoyce over sinners when they repent.

SECT. 2.

II. IT is well also for the Vine-dresser in two respects.

1. It is well for Christ when a wicked man brings forth fruit ; for then he gathereth the fruits of his sufferings, and beholdeth the travel of his soul : all that Christ suffered was to make us to bring forth these fruits : those dolours which he felt and suffered in his soul and body ; when the heavy wrath of God for our sins lay upon him, were thy conversion and faith : those graces are his purchase as well as his gift. *When thou shalt make his Soul an offering*
for

for sin, he shall see his seed, Isa. 53. 10, 11.
The meaning is, when Christ shall deliver himself up to death for sin, then he shall see poor sinners repenting and believing, who are his seed. *He shall see the travel of his soul and be satisfied.* (1.) Christ shall see them repenting and believing to his full satisfaction and contentment: Oh what contentment is it to a Gardiner to see a withered tree to live and flourish, and bear fruit again? It is an high contentment to Christ to behold thee bearing fruit. Thou through thine impenitency (as much as lyeth in thee) makest Christ to die in vain, to endure all his Fathers wrath in vain: Methinks this should be a powerful perswasion to bring forth fruit, seeing thy repentance is the fruit of his sufferings, and thy faith is the full satisfaction of his soul, which he offered upon the Cross for thee.

2. It is well for Christ also, in that our bearing fruit is an high praise and commendation of all the precious means and ordinances of grace which Christ for this very purpose hath appointed in his Church. Hath not he published the Gospel, and commanded the Gospel to be preached everywhere to invite and bring men to repentance?

penitance? hath not he set up the Ministry of the Gospel in his Church to Preach repentance, and to warn every man everywhere to repent? Oh therefore when a man brings forth the fruit of repentance, the dignity and efficacy of his holy ordinances do appear; what makes the world to think that there is nothing in the word and ordinances, that they are broken Cisterns, dry, empty things, and powerless, but this, that men live under them, and bring not forth that fruit for which they are appointed? There is none that can value them more than thousands of Gold and Silver, but such as have experimented the admirable efficacy of them upon their own souls: and the world thinks them to be useless things, and powerless means, as long as they behold men bringing not forth fruits meet for such holy and powerful ordinances.

SECT. 3.

III. **I**T is well for the Ministers, when men shall at the last after all their pains-taking and wasting their strength, bring forth fruit meet for their labours. As it is well for the Husbandman, when
his

his ground shall after some years and cost bring forth a full crop : and tis well for the Gardiner, when his Trees shall at last bring forth fruit : so tis well for the Ministers of the Word, if at length their People shall repent, and walk as becomes the Gospel of Christ which they Preach. *What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? saith Paul. 1 Thel. 2. 19 are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ? for ye are our glory and joy ; as if he had said, ye that are converted by Ministers unto Christ, ye are and shall be the joy, the crown, the glory of Ministers at the day of Christ. How will Ministers give up their account with joy ? Wicked men are the shame and grief of Godly Ministers, and in the day of Christ all Ministers will be the horreur and terrour of all ungodly persons that lived under their Ministry.*

I V. It is well for the Vineyard, for the Church in which they live ; it is well for the Town and place where they dwell.

I. It is well for the Church in which they are, because the number of believers is encreased by new Converts. Psal. 87. 5. *And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her, and the Highest him-
self*

self shall establish her. It is Prophetically spoken of the conversion of the Gentiles to Christ by the Preaching of the Gospel, This and that man was born in her, (1.) This and that Nation and People are regenerated by the word and spirit of Christ; but it is also applicable to every particular person that is effectually called from sin to Christ; this man was born in her, that man was born in her; this sinner was converted, that Profane wretch was converted, that unclean person was washed and sanctified in her. And it is observable, what promise is made to the Church, wherein people are by the Ministry of the Word converted; *The most high shall establish her.* (1.) God will secure and fence that Church, God will establish his ordinances and Gospel there: it is mens unfruitfulness under the Gospel, which endangereth and brings the removal of the Gospel from this to another people: if we have any desire that God shall continue the Gospel and his ordinances, let us be fruitful, and God will establish: Multitudes of converts are the glory of a Church, as multitudes of fruit-bearing trees are the glory of a Vineyard.

2. It is well for the very Town and place where

where they dwell : for whose sake doth God keep off destruction from a Town ? is it not for the sake of the righteous there ? I will not destroy *Sodom* for tens sake ; a few righteous men will preserve a City from terrible destruction. The Godly are the Pillars that bear up a Town ; the Church is the pillar that bears up the world : *Potiphar* was blessed because of *Joseph* in his Family. The more converts (few or many) are in a Town, there are so many men there Praying for the Town where they live : and it is well for that Town : it is for their praying, mourning and repenting for the abominations of places wherein they live, that the clouds drop not down fire and brimstone upon it : the many oaths that wicked men belch out, their cursing, their drunkenness, their many abominable practices do cry for vengeance ; but the Prayers of a few righteous persons do out-cry the cry of sin, and yet obtaineth mercy for the places where they live : Brethren ! if you desire the welfare of this Town, then bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; Oh let it be said, This and that man was converted to Christ by the Preaching of the Gospel in this Town ; the most High will then establish us.

V. It

V. It is well for other barren Trees, when any one Tree becomes fruit-bearing: it is well for other wicked men when some are converted, because when one profane man is powerfully wrought upon, he will do his endeavour by his prayers, counsels, instructions to convert others. *Psal. 51. 12, 13. Restore unto me the joy of thy Salvation, then I will teach transgressours thy wayes, and sinners shall be converted to thee:* as if he had said, Lord make me to feel the comfortable effects of thy grace and favour, and I will by my example and instructions endeavour the conversion of others. No sooner was *Paul* converted, but he planted and watered, digged and dunged to make others fruitful. So *Philip* calls *Nathaniel* to see Christ: and the Woman of *Samaria*, when converted, calls all her neighbours to see him also; by this occasion many were converted, *Joh. 4. 39.* As a Ring touched with a Load-stone will draw another Ring to it, and that will draw a third, and that will draw a fourth: so when once the heart of man is truly touched with Christ, he will endeavour to draw others to him. Grace is very communicative and diffusive; Although it will not make a man a busie-body in other mens matters;

matters, yet it will make him very active in the conversion of other men; it will make a man to cry out with *Paul*, *I wish that all that hear me now, were such as I am, excepting these bonds.*

SECT. 4.

VI. **I**T is well for the godly when others become fruitful in holiness, that such who in times past were unprofitable burdens to them, should become profitable; such who once hindred them, do now promote their piety; such who once had them in derision, now have them in honour and esteem for their Godliness. Iron will sharpen iron, and gracious men will quicken one another: It was a joy to *Paul* that *Onesimus*, that before his conversion was unprofitable, was now become profitable both to *Paul* and *Philemon*: Ministers and people have more good company in Heavens way, praying one for another, exhorting one another, and provoking one another to love, and to good works.

VII. It is well for weak and trembling Christians: when a great Sinner is made a true Saint: when they shall see how God hath

hath shewn mercy to a *Saul*, to a blasphemer, to a persecutor, an injurious man, to one of the chief of sinners ; how doth it raise up the spirits of trembling sinners to expect grace, mercy and comfort from God ! if the grace of God makes such dry trees fruitful ; shall not his Grace make green trees fruitful ? If God turns such briars and thorns into figg-trees, there is hope that he will make you fruitful. Oh do not despair, but hope and pray, when you see grace to abound where iniquity did so monstrously abound.

VIII. It is very well for the Tree it self, for the man whom the Patience and forbearance of God, and the means of grace hath sweetly and powerfully led to repentance ; if thou bearest fruit, it is well for thee. It is marvellous well for that sinner that is turned from sin to God, in these four particulars.

1. It saveth a cutting down, it preventeth that damnation that slumbers not, it saves from being cast into hell-fire. The axe of Divine vengeance shall lie no longer at the root of that Tree that bringeth forth good fruit, *Joh. 6. 37. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* No Gardiner will cut down his best Trees.

2. It

2. It is very well for him, because God pardons all his former unfruitfulness, he forgets and forgives all those wild grapes which he hath brought forth; albeit he hath been a long time unfruitful, and hath abounded in the unfruitful works of darkness, God will abundantly pardon all.

3. Tis very well for him, because now God himself will take special care of him, and will make him more fruitful, Joh. 15. 2. *Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*: lusts are great hinderances of fruit-bearing; God will purge him from these, that he may abound in fruit; God will make all means powerful; the Word, Sacraments, Prayers, Mercies, Judgements, all these shall make him to bring forth fruit in due season: see what a comfortable promise is made to fruit-bearing Christians, Psal. 1. 3. *Whatsoever he doth shall prosper*: all his praying, hearing of the Word, &c. shall prosper.

4. It shall be very well for him hereafter; when God shall transport him from earth to Heaven, how gloriously will God reward him for his fruitfulness! he shall eat of his own fruits in Heaven; according

to his fruitfulness in grace, shall his reward of glory be: the seed of grace sown here, will bring forth in some thirty fold, in some sixty fold, in some an hundred fold of glory and blessedness: according to what we sow, we shall reap: he that soweth plentifully, shall reap plentifully: God will Crown his own graces, when, and wheresoever he sees them flourishing.

CHAP. XXX.

Use 1.

THE first Use of this point is for Exhortation: you then that have stood for many years fruitless, and yet walk in the hardness and impentency of your hearts, be ye perswaded now, even now to bring forth fruit; let God find repentance, faith, holiness springing up in thee. I have a commission from God to assure you, that if after all your former unfruitfulness, you will bring forth fruit, it shall be well with you, and happy for ever shall you be. Do we not all desire our own wellfare? where is the man that hath not a desire to reap the fruits of eternal life? then bring ye forth the fruits of faith and holiness.

Ob

Oh do not conclude within thy heart, that there is no hope : whiles God suffers thee to stand, and his Ministers are inviting thee to repent, there is hope that thou maist be fruitful at last. Do not fear that thou shalt not be accepted, seeing thou hast brought forth wild grapes for so long continuance ; Christ tells thee that it shall be well with thee, God will take delight in thee. Let me exhort thee again, not to delay and put off thy conversion to God ; yet God lets you alone, but we know not how soon he will cut you down : God hath sought fruit on thee for a great while already, and hath long born with thy unfruitfulness : Behold, he still bears with thee, his end is to try what thou wilt do now, but though he bears long, he will not bear allwayes.

This may yeeld consolation to such who *Use 2.* are troubled and ashamed for their long unfruitfulness under the means of grace : their fears perhaps are, that now God will not have respect to them and their fruit ; and their thoughts and wishes are, Oh that I had done this sooner ! Oh that I had remembered my Creator in the dayes of my youth ! then it had been well with me now : but then I did neither mind God,

nor my soul, nor any thing that good is : how can I expect it will be well with my poor soul ! let me tell thee to thy comfort, that to be ashamed of thy unfruitfulness, and to lament it before the Lord, it is precious fruit in the sight of God : it is well, it shall be well with such : go on in humbling thy self, and mourning for thy unfruitfulness ; and know that in due time this seed of penitential tears shall bring forth a plentiful crop of joy : it is Gods promise, *that they that sow in tears shall reap in joy*, Psal. 126. 5, 6.

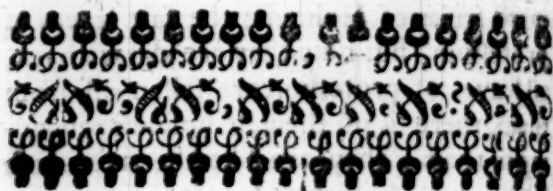
Use 3.

What comfort doth this speak to such who turn to God betimes, and bring forth fruit the first year of their planting ! if it be well for old fruitless trees, for old sinners to bring forth fruit at last, after they have spent their time and strength in bringing forth the unfruitful works of darkness ; Oh then how well shall it be with them, that like *Josiah* and *Timothy* do bring forth fruits in the beginning of their dayes, before they were drenched in wickedness ! for such there is laid up a larger measure of glory.

Use 4.

What terrour doth this speak to all withered Apostates, those whom the Apostle call *trees twice dead, pluckt up by the roots*,
who

who did for a while bring forth the outward fruits of Holiness, the fair leaves of profession, but now they are drawn back, all leaves of profession are fallen off from them, there is no shew of holiness remaining in them; they are like the tree which Christ cursed, withered from top to root, from life to heart, that there is no hope that ever fruit will grow on them any more; the means of grace do burn them up, and rot them more and more: oh how ill shall it be with such Apostatical professors! these withered cursed trees will make the hottest fire in Hell: no souls do burn more fiercely in Hell than apostate souls; they are trees twice dead, therefore they shall be twice damned.



LUKE 13. 9.

*And if not, then after that thou shalt
cut it down.*

Serm. 16. Preached February 16. 1661.

CHAP. XXXI.

THere is no difficulty in these words, only it is in the Greek *εἰς τὸ μέλλον*, which we translate, *after that*; it properly signifies, For the time to come, do with the Tree what thou pleasest, cut him down as soon as thou wilt; for the time to come I will have no more to do with him, I will have no more care of him: hence I note,

If

If the long sufferance of God, and the powerful means of grace shall not make men to bear fruit, then no more intercession shall be made for them, but they shall be cut down. *Obfer.*

1. My Text informs us, that Christ the Vine-dresser will make no more intercession for the continuance of Gods patience and the means of grace, he will never speak one word more to the Master of the Vineyard, Lord, let him alone another year also, and I will digg about him and dung him; if Christ intercedeth not, ye are undone.

2. The Ministers may make intercessions for them, because they know not when the day of grace is expired; yet God will not hear their prayers for them. *Jerem.*

15. 1. The Lord said unto me, *Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight:* that is, if thole two holy men should stand and intercede for this people, yet I would not hear them, as I have done in former times: the most righteous, fervent, praying Ministers shall not prevail with me for them: cast them out of my sight like vile and abominable persons.

3. They shall pray for themselves, Lord,

spare me, and shew mercy to me, and I will be a better man ; but all their cries and prayers for themselves shall not be heard , Prov. 1. 28. *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me , for that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord : you would not hear me inviting you to repentance ; now I will not hear you praying for mercy ; you hated the knowledge of God, you despised grace and holiness ; therefore I will despise your prayers : you slighted mercy offered ; now I will despise your prayers for mercy.*

For proof that such persons shall be cut down ; consider Prov. 29. 1. *He that is often reprov'd, and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* That man that goes on in the hardness and impenitency of his heart under the means of grace, sudden and remediless destruction shall come upon him ; you shall have more proofs and instances in the further handling of the Doctrine.

CHAP. XXXII.

SECT. I.

LET me now in the first place explain what this cutting down is. There is a threefold cutting down of unfruitful persons.

I. There is a spiritual cutting down of them: this judgement is spiritual and insensible, therefore it is more terrible in it self, though not to the party himself, nor to others; spiritual judgements are double judgements. This cutting down is many ways effected.

1. Either by withdrawing the means of grace from them, when God shall remove the Gospel, Ordinances, and Ministry from a people. *Isai. 5. 5. And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall, and it shall be trodden down, and will make it a desolation; that is, I will remove all mine ordinances from them, and will have no more care of them, but let lusts and Devils tread them down. Thus did God cut down the Jewish Church:*

Church : that very Paradise in the world is now become an howling wilderness : and thus God hath cut down the seven Asian Churches by removing the Candlestick from them, *Rev. 2. & Rev. 3.*

2. Or by withdrawing the power and efficacy from the means of grace ; that all the means of grace shall do a man no more good than the application of warm cloaths doth to a dead Carcass : Men shall stand in the Vineyard under Gospel ordinances, but the Preaching thereof shall be to them a favour of death : the things that belong to their peace shall be hidden from their eyes ; the Word shall fall upon them like rain upon Rocks, and soften them no more then rain doth soften the rocks : they shall relish no more sweetness in Gods ordinances, then in a dry chip ; the word of God shall no more terrifie them, than thunder doth a deaf man ; they shall willingly and wilfully make light of all Gods counsels and invitations.

3. God will give them up to their own lusts, imaginations, and vile affections : Oh ! it is sad when wicked men do walk after the imaginations of their own hearts, and obey their vile affections : yet such men may be at length converted : but
when

when God shall judicially give them up to their own vile affections, when God in wrath and vengeance shall say to a man ; *Let him that is filthy, be filthy still, Let him alone*, let him that is wicked be wicked still, let him alone, let him walk on still in his abominable wayes : woe to the soul from whom God thus departeth.

4. By shutting them up in unbelief and impenitency : all wicked men are unbelievers and impenitent ; yet still there is hope, that they may in time believe and repent ; but when God shall judicially shut them up in unbelief, then they shall never believe, they shall never repent : the figg-tree could never bring forth fruit, because Christ had cursed it, saying, *never let fruit grow on thee* ; so such men being cursed of God, never let faith and repentance grow on them, never let them come to the knowledge of the truth, Isa. 6. 9. *Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not, see ye indeed, but perceive not :* (1.) Ye shall indeed hear the word, but ye shall not understand, nor believe what you hear, nor be converted by the word : this shall be Gods judgement upon you, I will give you up to an hardened, unbelieving and impenitent heart : ye shall be in chains
of

of unbelief and impenitency here, and in chains of everlasting darkness hereafter.

SECT. 2.

II. **T**HERE is a corporal cutting down of unfruitful persons by death; as *Ananias* and *Saphira* were destroyed by sudden death, *Act. 5*. So was *Judas* who had lived under Christs Ministry for the space of three years, and brought forth no fruit: it is *Beza's* observation, that the Syriack reads those words in the foregoing verse [Why cumbreth it the ground?] *Lemachai quare viveret dilata excisione?* Why should he live? why is his cutting down deferred any longer? and it is conceived upon rational grounds, that though the day of a mans grace may be passed before the day of Gods patience be expired, so that a man may and doth live, yet when the determinate time of Gods long-sufferance is gone, then he sends some sickness or other accident to take men out of the world, not permitting those that are without the Church to cumber the world any longer; and those that are within the Church, not to cumber either the Church or the world any more. And as there

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Bez. annot.
in loc.

there is a determinate measure and fulness of grace to which the godly do arrive, then death cometh and transplanteth them into heaven; so there is a fulness of sin to which wicked men shall come, then death translates them into hell: and untill their sins be full, God forbears to cut them down, and means are used for their conversion: but when their sins are full, there is a period of Gods patience toward them, and then God in wrath takes them out of the world: and know ye that some mens measure of sins is sooner filled up then others; hence it is that some men are sooner cut down then others: we see how some wicked men do not live out half their dayes, and other wicked men live a longer time: but be assured, as soon as the appointed dayes of Gods long-sufferance are expired, God will then cut them down by death, and no means, no prayers shall prevent it: but men see this cutting down to be common to the fruitful and unfruitful trees, and therefore do not much regard it, though there is a vast difference between their cutting down by death.

S E C T.

SECT. 3.

III. **T**Here is an eternal cutting down of unfruitful trees, Gods destroying them with an everlasting destruction: after he hath cut down their bodies, he destroys their souls in hell, *Matth. 3. 10.* and now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewen down, and cast into the fire. The axe is laid] which noteth Gods present forbearance of cutting them down: it is laid to the root of the Tree,] it is not laid to the branches, nor to the body, but to the root; noting the final destruction of the tree. When a tree is stocked up by the root, *nulla spes repullulandi*, there is no hope of its growing again: it is said it is hewen down.] which noteth the certainty of that mans final and irrecoverable destruction: and is cast into the fire.] which noteth the horrible and tormentous destruction of the soul immediately after death, and both of soul and body at the day of judgement. Thus was *Judas* cut down: no sooner had death separated his soul from his body, but his soul went to his own place,

Act. 1.

Act. 1. that is to Hell, for Hell is the proper place and inheritance of the wicked: therefore wicked men are called children of Hell, heirs of Hell, where they must burn to millions of ages: Oh what is the fuel of Hell-fire, but the souls of fruitless and impenitent persons? and who are they that are in the most fiery dungeons in hell? (for there are some Furnaces which the wrath of God causeth to be heated seven times hotter then other) even they are cast into them who have had more riches of patience and long-sufferance, and more means of grace than other persons. Thus you see what is meant by cutting down.

CHAP. XXXIII.

I Will yet add three propositions more by way of explication of the point.

This Doctrine is to be understood of such *Prop. 1.*
who have enjoyed all means, which tend to make them bear fruit: Gods Ministers (as our Saviour saith in the Parable, Mat. 11. 17.) *have piped and daunced, mourned and lamented* over a froward and perverse generation, they have endeavoured to
allure

allure them to repent by Evangelical mercies and offers, and to drive them to repentance by legal threatnings, but all their labour was in vain.

Prop. 2.

It is meant of such who have enjoyed the powerful means of conversion for some long space of time : for three years, saith Christ in this Parable : that is, for some years they have been earnestly invited to repent, and warned to bring forth fruit, that they may escape the damnation of Hell.

Prop. 3.

It is to be understood especially of such, who have had more than ordinary patience, who have had a large space to repent. They deserved a former cutting down, but there was effectual mediation made for them : Gods mercy prevailed with his justice to let them alone one year more, but all proved in vain : they turned the long sufferance of God into wantonness, and grew harder and more obstinate under all the means of grace. As the longer the Sun warmeth and shineth on the earth, the harder it grows : so it is with these men, the longer they live under the means of grace, the more obstinate they are in wickedness.

CHAP. XXXIV.

The Reasons of the Point.

Reason 1.

THERE is nothing but equity and justice in this act of vengeance that such persons should be destroyed; yea, it is so equal, that God appeals to men to judge between him and the wicked, Isa. 5. 3, 4 5. *Judge I pray you betwixt me and my Vineyard: What could I have done more to my Vineyard, which I have not done? seeing I have done all this for it: Now I will tell you, what I will do to my Vineyard. I will break up the hedge, pluck down the wall, I will lay it waste, I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. As who should say: judge I pray you whether this be not a just act of mine, to lay an unfruitful field waste? it is just that the clouds rain no more upon it: Under all these rhetorical words the Lord sheweth, it is very just for him to lay that soul waste that doth not bring forth fruit; to destroy that man for sin, who will not repent from sin; to deny grace and mercy to that man who will not receive grace and mercy when it is freely offered: to*

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pour

pour out his wrath on that man, who willingly abuseth the riches of his patience and long-sufferance: to hear no more prayers and mediation for him who will by no means hearken to his gracious invitations: We cannot but cry out with *Mauritius* the Emperour, *Iustus es Domine, & iusta sunt iudicia tua*, Righteous art thou O Lord, and just are thy judgments.

Reas. 2.

Because such persons are hopeless, desperately and incurably wicked and impenitent under all means, and mercies, and dealings. A Gardiner will cut down the trees that are twice dead, and there is no hopes of their flourishing: and to speak after the manner of men, God himself hath no hopes of such men: it is in vain to let them live; and to delay cutting them down: the longer they live, the worse they grow; they become more desperately wicked, and more wilfully obstinate; away therefore with them, cast them into Hell, let them be as wicked as Devils: God is dishonoured by their life, and glorified by their destruction.

Reason 3. Because they are unprofitable burdens: it is better for the Church, yea it is better for the people of God; yea it is better

ter for some wicked men, in whom there is yet some hopes, and some tendencies to goodness, that these are cut down; it is Gods reason, *Cut it down, Why cumbereth it the ground?* When once they are cut down, they will be no cumberance to my Ministers, my people, nor my self: they will do no more mischief if once they are cut down; whiles they stand they are very injurious to the souls of others.

Because God will avenge their high contempt of his most pretious mercies; he will avenge on them the contempt of his Word and of his Ministers, the contempt of his offers, calls and invitations, the contempt of his patience and forbearance: the sense of his wrath shall make them to know what mercies they have wilfully rejected, what grace they have received in vain: When God shall have cast them into hell, then they shall bewail the opportunities of salvation they have mispent, what patience they have abused: seeing God by the means of grace could not bring them to repentance, he will by the torments of hell force them to repent too late. All men shall repent, either here while repentance is of avail to their salvation, or they shall repent in hell torments;

ments; but though they could weep Hell full of tears, yet they shall be never the better.

Reason 5.

Because God will gather some fruit of glory from them: if he doth not reap glory from them by their conversion, he will reap glory from them by their confusion and destruction. All the wicked shall bow to his name, *Phil. 3. 10.* things under the earth, that is, damned Devils, and damned men shall bow to the Judge of the whole world.

CHAP. XXV.

Quest.

Here it may be demanded, how a man shall discern whether he be spiritually cur down?

Sol.

Positive and sure signs none can give, but probable signs; it is an inward judgement which others cannot discern: though the signs be certain *in thesi*, yet they are but conjectural in *hypothesi*, as applied to any person.

2. What signs I shall give, must be understood as with the heart of such a man continually: for there may be decayes and recoveries in one and the same; there
are

are ebbs and flows in godly hearts: God hath withdrawn from a man, and returned to him again: it is when the spirit of God forsakes a man, as Noahs Raven did the Ark, never returning back again. These two things being premised, ponder upon these signs.

1. When men are continually growing worse and worse in their practicals, as one said of an Emperour, He fell *a bono ad mala, a malis ad vitia, a vitiis ad deteriora*, from good to evil, and from evil to worse vices, and so from worse to worse: so it is when a man living under the means of grace grows worse and worse in his conversation; his leaves of outward profession do not only wither, but fall off; he is not only now and then overtaken with a fault, But he is grown customary in some gross sinful way; the case of that man is sad.

2. When a mans pretious but common gifts do much decay, and come to little; he hath not the gift of prayer which he had formerly, no love nor delight in prayer which formerly he had: perhaps now he is fallen from deadness in prayer to neglect, from neglect into contempt, this also is a sad sign.

3. When the Spirit of God withdraws his workings in the heart : a man hath no more such good motions, and good purposes which he formerly hath had ; he feels not the strivings of Gods spirit with him as formerly ; he no more heareth the voice of God behind him , crying, *This is the good way, walk in it* : it is a sad sign that God is cutting him down.

4. What power and efficacy have Ordinances now upon thy soul ? What relish and sweetness dost thou now find in them ? time was they were sweet to thee , now they are a burden to thee : thou art weary of them : What doth the word of God (which the Apostle calleth a two-edged sword) wound thee no more ? thy heart is so flinty, that it doth not prick and pierce thy conscience : The word of God is by the Prophet *Jeremiah* compared to an hammer ; it beats upon thee, but thou art not sensible of the knocks as formerly, and it is thus with thee, at all times that thou hearest the word of God. What desires hast thou after Sacraments ? and if thou dost come, perhaps thou findest no more taste in Christ exhibited then is in the white of an Egg, as *Job* speaks in another case : Oh when Ordinances are become ineffe-
ctual

And, that man hath cause to lament his condition.

5. When a man is wholly given up to his lusts, and like *Ahab* hath sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord; he is sins bound servant, neither will he be controlled by the word of God, but sets God and all his counsels, reproofs, threatenings at defiance, and is sat down in the seat of the scornful; this is the man whom God hath cut down with the axe of eternal destruction.

CHAP. XXXVI.

BUT how shall I know that I am a fruitful person, and shall escape this cutting down? *Quest.*

1. By thy strength and spiritual activity *Resp.* in holy duties; thou canst run the wayes of Gods commandments: *Læsa actiones arguunt læsas potentias*: a dimm sight argues an indisposition in the eye, and to be thicke of hearing, argues an indisposition in the ear: on the contrary, quicksightedness argues a good eye: so a sluggish, lazy, dead frame in duries, argues the heart to be naught.

2. By thy delight in holiness and holy exercises; *delectatio est signum habitus generati*; delight in holiness proceeds from a renewed heart, Psal. 1. 2, 3. *He that delighteth in the Law of the Lord, is a tree planted by the rivers side, bringing forth fruit in due season*: that man is come to an high pitch of wickednesse, who makes his lusts his chiefest joy; so it is an high pitch of holinesse, when a man makes holiness his joy and glory.

3. Constancy in the waies of God; constancy in duty, and in an holy profession is a good sign, Psal. 1. 3. *Whose leaf shall not wither, or whose leaf doth not fall off, but is alwayes green and flourishing*: when a mans leaves of duty and outward profession fall off, the heart withereth within.

4 A man may know his fruitfulness by his growth in grace; at first grace is but little; therefore it is compared to smoking flax, to Mustard seed, the least of seeds, but it grows to a bigg tree: Psal. 92. 12. *The righteous shall flourish like a Palm tree, he shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon*: Palm-trees grow tall and straight; and though they be pressed down with ponderous things, yet they grow to a very great height:

height: thus a righteous man groweth, and though he be much oppressed with affliction, yet he groweth.

5. He that is fruitful, is best at last; the more and the longer he enjoyes the means, the more gracious and heavenly he is, Psal. 92. 14. *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, and in their age when nature decays.* They shall still be bringing forth fruit even to old age, and in their age when nature decayeth: Hypocrisie degenerates into Apostacy in old age, and Hypocrites are worst at last: it is a sad symptome when old Professors grow downward to the earth in their cares and affections.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVII.

use.

Learn hence what to expect if you bring forth fruit, you must expect destruction; if you are not fruit-bearing trees, expect to be cut down; either bring forth fruit, or expect to burn in Hell for ever: God will not alwayes let you stand in his Vineyard fruitless: Oh therefore to day bring forth fruit; yet thou dost enjoy patience and the means of grace, and who knoweth how soon thy day shall expire? if God should cut thee down, thy fall into Hell will be like that of *Capernaum*, from Heaven to Hell: How deep will thy fall into Hell be, that fallest from so great an height? all the years of patience thou hast had will be so many millstones about thy neck: all the Ordinances of grace will be so many millstones about thy neck; yea every Sermon thou hast heard will aggravate thy damnation: every Sacrament will aggravate thy damnation. I beseech you in Christs stead, whose intercession hath prevailed with God for your not cutting down, and hath obtained this sabbath, this Sermon for you, this present exhortation, that you would bring forth the
fruits

fruits of repentance. Oh do not weary your Ministers intreating you, and labouring your fruit-bearing: you may weary out men, but do not weary out my God also: Do not weary Christ the Vine-dresser: Do not weary the Spirit of God striving with your hearts. Woe to that soul to whom God shall say, as once he did to his people, *Jer.* 15. 6. I am weary with repenting, I am weary with expecting, I am weary of calling, I am weary of digging, I am weary of dunging, I am weary of inviting: therefore I will stretch forth my hand against thee and destroy thee; the destruction and damnation of such a person will be an ease to the Vine-dresser.

Victorious

53778

Victorious Violence.

Set forth in Two Ser-
mons on *Matth. 11. 12.*

By that Eminent and Learned Di-
vine, Mr. *Thomas Byrdall*, M. A.
late Minister of the Word, and
Preacher at *Walsall*, in the County
of *Stafford*.



L O N D O N,

Printed *Anno Dom.* 1666.





Victorious Violence.

MATTH. II. 12.

*And from the dayes of John the Baptist
until now, the Kingdom of Heaven
suffereth violence, and the violent
take it by force.*

Serm. 17. Preached February 23. 1661.

CHAP. I.



OUR Saviour having sent
away *John's* Disciples with
a full answer to the Que-
stion which they had pro-
posed concerning himself,
whether he was the Mes-
siah, in the seventh verse he turneth his
speech

speech to the multitude, and discoursed to them concerning *John*, and commends him in many particulars.

1. For his soundness of doctrine and steadinesse in preaching: *What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?* as who should say, when ye went forth into the wilderness where he preached, did you find him a fickle Teacher, shaken with all manner of doctrines as a reed is shaken with the wind? did ye perceive him of a light and frothy wit, to be a person of no more worth than a reed?

2. From his austerity in apparel: *what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? A Gallant in fine clothes?* such are to be seen at Court in Kings Palaces, and not in solitary wildernesses: you see how *John* was clothed with Camels hair, and a leathern girdle about him, feeding upon locusts and wild honey: worldly pomp and greatness was below his thoughts and desires.

3. From his office in the Church: *What went ye for to see? A Prophet? yea and I say unto you more then a Prophet: Yea* saith Christ, *John* indeed is a Prophet, and among them he was the most excellent; for he was Christs immediate Embassador and Messenger,

ger, sent to make way for Christ. He was prophesied of long before he came into the world: yea, no man, be he Prince or Prophet, born after the ordinary course of nature, was greater than *John*; he was above the greatest of Kings, and the best of Prophets in respect of his office and dignity, because he was Christs fore-runner. The Prophets before *John* did prophesie of the coming of Christ; but *John* preached that he was come, did point at him with his finger, Lo yonder is the Christ: *Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world!* albeit *John* was so great a man, yet saith Christ, *he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven, is greater then he.* The Antients puzzeled themselves with the sense of these words. Some think it is meant of the Angels in Heaven, that the least of them is greater than *John*. Others think that he meaneth the glorified spirits of just men, the least among them is greater then *John*. Others think it is meant of Christ, called *least* in respect of his outward condition in the world; he was slighted by men as a contemptible person. Others take it for every mean believer in this Evangelical state of the Church; the least believer un-

der the Gospel, is greater than *John* living under the legal Ministrations. But I find that Interpreters generally take it for the meanest and least Minister of the Gospel; how despicable soever they be in the eye of the world, yet the least of them is greater than *John* the Baptist, the greatest, but the last of the Prophets under the Law. The reason why it is meant of Ministers in office, is, because Christs Discourse is altogether concerning Prophets and Ministers of Christ. And every Gospel Minister is greater than *John*, because they preach that Christ hath finished the work of redemption, which *John* did not: he told the people that Christ was come, and therefore was greater then all the Prophets. But we preach that Christ is come, and also that he died, was buried, and is risen again, is ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, he hath fulfilled all prophecies of him: therefore we are greater than *John* and all the Prophets.

If I should make any Observations from hence, you would not believe them, though they be told you from the mouth of Christ; as that we may learn hence, that the office of a Gospel-Minister is a most glorious office, how contemptible soever it be in
your

your eyes. Hence also we may learn not to despise the least Minister of Christ: in so doing, you despise him that is greater than all the Prophets, and *John* the Baptist; and you would despise them if they were living? God will in time take vengeance on all such persons. Moreover, hence you may see how happy the condition of those is, who live under a Gospel-Ministry.

4. Our Saviour commends *John* from the efficacy of his doctrine, and how from his time the Gospel hath been very effectual, in the words of my Text, *From the dayes of John Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, &c.*

CHAP. II.

TO explain the words: *From the dayes of John the Baptist.*] that is, from the time wherein *John* the Baptist began his Ministry, and to preach repentance to the people ——— *Until now.*] Here two Questions crave an answer.

1. Why is it said from the dayes of *John*, *Quest.* and not of Christ, who came, Preached and wrought his mighty works?

Sol.

1. It is all one, seeing *John* and Christ were contemporaries, and from *John's* time of preaching, until Christs time of preaching.

2. Christ was pleased to conceal himself, and to mention *John*.

3. The dayes of *John* are mentioned, because his dayes were the last dayes of the Legal Ministry, and Mosaical Worship: these shadows were now upon their vanishing away; a Gospel Ministry was now to take place.

Quest.

2. Whether do these words, [from *John's dayes until now*] pertain to us now at this very day?

Sol.

These words are an History, and a Prophecie: an History relating what success the preaching of the Gospel had in those dayes, when *John*, Christ and his Apostles preached; men did with an holy greediness embrace the Gospel.

By the Kingdom of Heaven we are not only to understand the Kingdom of glory, but also all the means leading thereunto, all that is requisite to the obtaining thereof; the Kingdom of grace, viz. the Gospel of Christ, Jesus Christ himself, his merits and benefits, all the grace and mercy which is propounded and offered to sinners
in

in and by the Ministry of the Gospel, is to be understood by the Kingdom of Heaven in this place.

Suffereth violence.] The question is whether these words are to be taken actively or passively. Some take them in an active sense, and make this the meaning: Christ by his Gospel and offers therein, doth powerfully, irresistibly, yet sweetly draw men to himself; and do bring that Text, Luke 14.23. *Compell them to come in, that my house may be full*, for the making good their opinion: (1.) when Christ by his word and Spirit powerfully draws a soul to himself; it is a violent, yet a sweet compulsion of him.

But others take the words in a passive sense, and so make the meaning thus: Men do with an holy greedinesse, and fervour of Spirit lay hold on Christ and his benefits, and do as it were with violence take hold of him and salvation in him and by him; or as *Calvin* note h, Men not only *cupide, sed rapidi impetu gratiam oblatam recipiunt*; they do not only desire Christ, but with an holy violence lay hold upon him, Thou art mine, and shalt be my Saviour. *Tossanus* thus expresseth it: *salutem ac vitam in Christo certatim ad se rapit fides*: *Calvin in loc.* *Tossan. in loc.*

faith layes hold on Salvation in Christ, as Souldiers do lay their hands on rich booty, striving who can have most; so this violence is nothing else but an holy eagerness and earnestness of the soul to be saved.

And the violent take it by force] that is, only they who are earnest and resolute to obtain salvation, shall obtain it: it is a Metaphor taken from Souldiers, who are resolved to venture desperately upon the mouth of Guns and Canons, but they will storm and take the City or Castle, in which they shall find incredible treasure: so is heaven and salvation obtained by resolution to venture all, and to endure all; come what can, and will come, they must be saved; they will *perrumpere omnia impetuoso impetu*, break through all difficulties that they may gain heaven, saith Calvin.

CHAP. III.

THE words being thus explained,
give us this point of Doctrine,

That they, and only they do, and shall *Doctr.*
obtain Christ, grace, and salvation offered
in the Gospel, who with an holy violence
seek and lay hold on Christ and salvation
by him. — Christ and salvation is pro-
posed to all, and preached to all: Heaven
is offered to all; but none shall obtain sal-
vation and the kingdom, but they that
take it by force: he only inherits salva-
tion, that lays hold on Christ for Salvation;
he will have Christ, and will follow Christ,
let lusts, the world, and devils do their ut-
most to hinder him from Christ and salva-
tion. As Rachel said to Jacob, Give me
Children or I must die; let me die rather
than be without Children; Oh let me have
Children though I die for bearing of them;
so when the soul cries out, I must have
Christ though I die for having him; I will
follow Christ, though I know I shall suffer
death for his sake; Christ and salvation I
will, I must have, whatsoever it cost me,
this is the man that shall obtain the King-
dom of heaven; Luke 16. 16. Since that

time the Kingdom of God is preached, every man presseth into it, thrust, crowd into it, an action of violence, and the word is the same in my Text, Βιζζετω, *Luke 13. 24.* strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able; ἀγωνίζεσθε, contend and strive like wrestlers and combatants, *Phil. 3. 14.* reaching forth unto those things which are before me, ἐπεκτείνω μὲν, the word noteth a reaching forth neck, head, arms, body and all to lay hold: Κατὰ σκοπὸν δώσω, I prosecute the mark with all violence, an allusion to those that run in a race.

CHAP. IV.

IN handling this point, I shall first shew you what this violence importeth.

1. It denoteth the bent and peremptory resolution of the will for Christ, grace, and Salvation: that as St. *Paul* saith of worldly men, *They will be rich*: their wills are set upon the gaining of riches, and they will seek them, come what will; so a violent Christian is set upon having Christ, he will have Christ, he will be godly, he will be saved; this is his resolution,
I must

I must, I will follow Christ; I must, I will be saved: experience tells us that violent men are wilfull men; the more violent, the more wilfull; and violence is nothing else but wilfulness: this I will do, I am resolved to do, saith the violent man; no entreaties, nor perswasions shall take them off from what they will do: in this holy violence there is an holy and spiritual wilfulness: they are resolved to be godly, and to carry heaven as it were by force, nothing shall dissuade them, but they will have their wills.

2. It importeth strength and fervour of affections: this followeth upon the former; the Will commandeth and carrieth the affections with it; what the will runs after, that the affections do violently pursue, that doth a violent Christian love, desire, in that doth he delight above all things. As when a man loveth riches & honours, he desireth them above all things; the full stream of his affections runs violently after them: so it is in spiritual violence, the strength and violence of the affections are carried out, and run after God, and salvation. In Scripture therefore it is compared to hunger, and thirst, and longing which are violent desires: the hungry man must and will

will have meat, and desireth nothing else but meat, and nothing can satisfie him but meat : so the violent Christian, he hungrerh and thirsteth and longeth for Christ ; he must and will have him, and nothing but Christ can satisfie him, Psal. 84: 1, 2. *My soul longeth, yea fainteth, my flesh cryeth out for the living God*: the Saints longing after God is nothing else but the violence of their affections ; passionate and affectionate men are violent men : the more passionate, the more violent : What strange acts of violence do men in their heat of passion !

3. It importeth an earnestness and diligence in the use of all holy and appointed means tending to the obtaining Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven : violent men are not idle, dull, lazy persons, but earnest, active and industrious in their businesses : and the more violent any man is, the more earnest he is ; violence is the utmost degree of activity : so wherever this spiritual violence is, there is wondrous activity in Gods service and wayes. *I will run the way of thy commandments* saith David : he will not only walk in them, but run ; there is great violence in running. In *Act. 26. 7.* we read of the Tribes serving God instantly ;

Psal. 119.
32.

ly; the original word is ἐκ τρυφῆς, that is, they served God to the utmost of their strength. So we are commanded to serve God with all our soul, with all our might, as labourers do their work with all their might and strength: the world wondereth what it is that makes these men so eager after Gods ordinances, and so earnest in holy exercises; it is a principle of holy violence: they are called upon to give diligence to work out their salvation, to make their calling and election sure, 2 Pet. 1. 10. which some parallel to my Text, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, &c. as who should say, be diligent in adding grace to grace, and duty to duty.

4. It imports the importunity of the soul in prayer for the obtaining these things: they cry out, Lord, give me grace, pardon; Oh give me Christ, give me thy favour; Lord, help my unbelief, my impenitency. The Apostle calls it fervent praying, Jam. 5. 16. violent praying. The Prophet compares it to Jacobs wrestling, Hosea. 12. S. Paul expresseth it by sighes and groans unsufferable: groans are the violent expressions of a praying soul. Christ expresseth this by a Parable of an importunate

importunate Widow to an unjust Judge, Luk. 18. 5. *Because this Woman troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me: And the Lord said, bear what the unjust Judge saith: now as she, so doth a violent soul as it were with an holy importunity trouble God, and gives him no rest, but is continually coming to him, Lord, pardon me, Lord renew me, Lord help my unbelief.* So the Cananitish woman, *Matth. 15. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.* she would not give over crying, *Have mercy Lord on me thou Son of David:* though Christ gave her no answer, still she cryed after him, *have mercy on me:* Christ called her Dog; she replyeth, though I am a dog, yet give me crumbs, *have mercy on me:* she cryed importunately till she obtained her desire. Solikewise the two blind men, *Matth. 20 30, 31.* cryed out, *Have mercy on us, Lord, thou Son of David:* the more they were rebuked, and bidden to hold their peace, the more thy cryed out, *Have mercy on us;* they would not give over till they had their desire granted them.

5. It implyeth an holy impatience and restlessness of spirit; violent men are alwayes impatient men; delays draw out their

their violence and impatience; so where there is holy violence, there is holy impatience till they have obtained an interest in Christ, and a title to Heaven, and some solid assurance thereof. What are all those expostulations in Scripture, but the expressions of holy violence and impatience? *How long wilt thou forget me O Lord, for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* Psal. 13. 1, 2. *Lord, why castest thou off my soul, why hidest thou thy face from me?* Psal. 88. 14. Violent men are like persons in great pain, impatient till they have ease given them.

6. It imports a constant earnestness and eagerness in seeking the things of salvation: Philosophers say, that *nullum Violentum est perpetuum*, no violent thing is constant, but it is not true of spiritual violence; this is perpetual and constant; though not at all times in the same height and degree, yet it is alwayes more or less: for it is not a fit, a humour, a passion, but it is like fire when kindled, continually burning, while fuell lasteth. A wicked man, an hypocrite may in a fit passionately cry out for mercy, while sickness or terrour is upon them, or some judgement feared; but when these fits are over,

over, their violence goes out, and appears no more : but holy violence is perpetual, is alwayes eager and earnest for Christ, in health as in sicknels; out of fears, as when a man is in his fears : he never prays but he offereth a holy violence to Christ and Heaven : it is like the fire on the Altar which was kept continually burning.

7. It imports undaunted courage against all opposition that is made : Violent men in their fits of violence fear no colours, but set themselves against all that oppose them : the more they are opposed, the more violent : *difficultas acuit conatum*, difficulty sharpens endeavours : valiant souldiers fear no enemy but will break through them ; so spiritual violence will make men fear no Opposite nor opposition in the way to salvation, but are violent and will break through all : Tell *David's* worthies, that they cannot come to the waters of *Bethlehem*, but they must cut their way through the host of the Philistins ; they will break through them, and will have the water : Tell a violent Christian, that if you will be godly, you must expect hatred, crosses, persecutions ; there is no coming to heaven without an army of tribulations and persecutions ; they will run through them

them all, for they will take Heaven: tell *Paul* if he go up to *Jerusalem*, he will be bound with chains, he will answer, I am ready to be bound: Tell *Luther* of his enemies at the City of *Wormes*, and advise him not to go: I will go saith *Luther*, if there be as many Devils at *Wormes* as there be Tiles on the houses: nothing can dismay an holy violent man, Zach. 12. 8. *In that day he that is feeble among them shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of the Lord before them: that is, they shall be as valiant and courageous as David, yea the very courage of an Angel shall be theirs, which is to be understood of this spiritual valour and courage of godly men.*

*Sleidan.
Comment.*

8. It imports great willingness and readiness to suffer any thing for Christ, yea death it self, that they may win the Kingdom of Heaven; As Souldiers lying before a Castle or Town will adventure the loss of their dearest lives, but they will carry the Town and Castle: so he that is truly violent for Heaven, will rather lose life, and all that is dear to him, that he may win the Kingdom of Heaven, Rev. 12. 11. *They loved not their lives unto the death: they will make little reckoning of their lives*

lives, but will deliver themselves up to shameful and tormentous deaths for Christ and his Kingdom, Act. 20. 24. *none of these things move me, I do not count my life dear unto my self, 2 Cor. 4. 11. We are alwayes delivered unto death for Jesus sake*; it was the saying of an holy Martyr, *Had I as many lives as hairs on my head, I would lose them all for Christ. I am glad saith another, that I have a life to lose for Christ.*

9 It imports an adhesion to Christ and his wayes in the worst of times: when the wicked are most violent against Christ and his wayes, then are they most violent for Christ and his wayes, as fire burns hottest in coldest seasons: when *Israel* was at the worst, then was *Elijah* most zealous for the Lord of hosts, the truth of Godliness is most tryed in such times, as in tempests and storms the skill of the Pilot is most seen; in the hottest encounters and battels the valour of a Souldier is most notorious: so the holy violence of a Christian is most notable in the midst of an adulterous and crooked generation: every faint-hearted Souldier is valiant where no enemy appears, and every faint-hearted hypocrite will be violent for Christ, when no enemies appear against Christ.

10. It

10. It importeth an holy greediness in laying hold on Christ and what is Christs : they think they can never have enough of him, of his spirit and graces : my Text alludes to Souldiers taking a Town by force ; how greedily do they lay their violent hands on the treasures found therein : every Souldier preyeth for himself, and thinks he can never have enough of plunder in the Town ; even thus do violent Christians make as it were a prey of Christ, they prey on his merits and graces and benefits, and think they can never have enough of Christ and holiness : or as beggars, when a dole is given, they crowd, snatch, pray, and intreat ; or as hungry men when meat is brought, snatch at it, or as drowing men catch and lay hold on the rope cast out to save them, so do violent Christians catch at Christ, and lay hold of him. *Tossanus* excellently on my Text saith, this is *violencia fidei, qua Christum ad se rapit, & sibi applicat*. Faith is violent, and draws Christ to the soul as a man draws any thing by force ; and snatcheth and applyeth Christ to it self, as if it could never have enough of him.

Serm. 18. Preached *March. 2. 1661.*

CHAP. V.

Gives us the Reasons why holy Violence is necessary to the obtaining of Heaven.

NOW the reasons why holy violence is necessary to the taking of heaven are these.

Reas. I. It is needful in regard of our own hearts in a double respect.

1. They are violently bent to sin; the heart is fully set to do evil saith the Preacher, *Eccles. 8. 11.* it is violently set, it is bent to backsliding, *Hos. 11.* it is desperately wicked saith *Jeremy, Chap. 17. 10.* if we do not set holy violence against this violence of our hearts, we shall be carryed down with a violent stream of wickedness into the lake of fire and brimstone; whence is it that so many run madding on in sin to Hell? they do and they will follow their own heart: it is because they have no holy violence in them to oppose the impetuous bent of their hearts to evil, *Prov. 4. 23.*

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keep thy heart above all keeping : we must keep with diligence every member of the body, but above all the heart is to be kept ; *Si alibi nocturnas, hic & nocturnas, & diurnas excubias collocemus, imò quaterniones* ; we must watch and ward over our hearts, yea we have need to place quaternions about our hearts : it is not an easie force that will bear us up against the violence of the natural bent of our hearts : nothing but a violent opposition will stop the violent bent of our hearts.

2. As our hearts are violently bent to evil, so they are violently set to oppose holiness, and our own happiness : *it is enmity it self*, saith S. Paul, *against the Law of God* : consider but the backwardness of our hearts to any one single duty : our own experience informs us how dead, how slothful, how unwilling, how backward our hearts are to any good : that we have all need to force our hearts, and to be earnest with an holy violence to duty : we must draw our hearts with the cords of holy violence unto prayer, unto meditation, to any thing that good is : and even bind our hearts with the same cords in the very performance of duty : what is the cause that men neglect duty, and negli-

gently perform duty, it is becaule men do not offer an holy violence to their indisposed and backward hearts : he that will obey God, must set himself against himself, must lay violence on his own heart.

2. Because every one hath many violent lusts within, and every man hath need to be violent against them : so many lusts within, so many violent enemies : Oh the violence that our souls do daily suffer ! how violently do lusts snatch our souls from God and Heaven ! they take us off by force ; how impetuous are our lusts in their solicitations and enticements ! they are so violent that they give us no rest night nor day, but continually trouble us ; that as the Prophet *Habakkuk* in another case, so the godly in regard of the impetuoufness of their lusts do cry unto God of their violence : It is not reasoning the matter with them, nor disputing, nor intreating, nor perswading them to be quiet ; but if ever we will have Heaven, we must offer strong violence and resistance to them, oppose them with might and main ; we must pluck them out and cut them off, be they as dear and useful to us as our right hands and eyes are ; we must lay violent hands on them, kill and crucifie them ;

them ; it is not a violent suppressing of them, but a violent mortification of them, that furthereth our salvation : men are slaves to lusts, and are taken and led captive by them, because they are not violent against them.

3. Because the devil is exceedingly violent against us : he useth all violence to take our souls by force : how violent are his temptations ! they run down upon us and against us like a mighty stream ; how violent are his suggestions ! he is violent that he may hinder us from taking the Kingdom of Heaven ; by how much the more you are violent for the getting of Heaven, the more outrageously violent he is against you ; he is alwayes withstanding you, and all to deprive you of the Kingdom of Heaven, and to take your souls by force. Oh what necessity is laid upon every one to be violent for the salvation of his own soul, having such violent enemies as devils are. This is the reason why men run so violently down the ways of sin into destruction, because they have no violence to oppose the violent temptations of the Devil ; he drives them violently, therefore they run violently : you know the story of the Devils entring into the Gadarens swine,

Matth. 8. 32. it is said, *When once the Devils entred into them, they ran violently down a steep place into the Sea, and perished in the waters*: even thus do wicked men for want of holy violence, run violently down the steep places of wickedness into the Sea of fire and brimstone, and eternally perish in those fiery lakes.

4. Because we have a world of violent enemies, violently opposing us in heavens way: all the good things of the world make violent assaults tempting and alluring us to take us off; how many are taken with these things and let go Heaven! *Demas* and *Judas* were born away with the violence of the things of this world. All the evil things of the world do violently oppose us to keep us from Heaven: what are all tribulations, afflictions and persecutions for righteousness sake, but strong violence to keep us off from holiness, and so from heaven? how many poor souls are by the force of them drawn and driven from the pursuit of heaven, chusing rather to have their ease and comfort here than to take Heaven by violence hereafter? All the wicked men in the world are violent against the righteous: he that will enter into heaven, must press through multitudes

multitudes of taunts, mockings, and revilings : yea, he that will take Heaven, must go against the multitude of men ; for the most in the world are going and walking in the way leading to destruction ; that he that will enter into Heaven, must press through a throng and crowd of people, must go against the stream of the multitude : judge then how necessary violence is for them that intend for Heaven.

5. We must be violent because of our own affections : we must cross, and go against the stream of our affections : he that is for Heaven, must not love what he will, nor desire what he would desire, nor delight in what he would delight in ; the current of our affections must run contrary to their natural course ; this *Jordan* must be turned backward ; we must hate what we formerly loved, and love what we formerly hated ; mourn for the want of that which formerly we delighted in the absence of it : how can we do this without violence, because our affections are naturally averse from heavenly things ! Our Saviour saith, *it is a very hard thing for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God, and it is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to*

enter into the Kingdom of God; the reason is, because it is very hard for them to turn their affections off from riches to Christ and Heaven: it is as the drawing of a Camel through a Needles eye; now to eff. & this, what force and violence must be used!

6. Because all the works of Godliness and salvation are very hard, therefore holy violence must be used: we read, *1 Pet. 4. 18.* that *the righteous shall scarcely be saved*: they shall be saved, but with much difficulty, and the difficulty ariseth not only from our own hearts, lusts, devils, and the world, but also from the difficulty of the works of Godliness; it is an hard matter to pray as we ought, to hear as we ought; it is hard to believe, it is hard to forsake sin, it is hard to obey God universally: there is not one duty in Godliness, but the common experience of all the Saints saith, it is hard to do: where difficulty is, there must be violence used to overcome the difficulty; formality and laziness will never carry a man through to heaven; and there is a reason why some men leave off building, having begun, because they find it a difficult work to finish the work of Salvation: there is more re-
quired

quired in this work than they did consider of before they took the profession of religion in hand : he spoke like an experienced Christian who said, *Christianus est perpetua natura violenta*, a Christian is one that offereth perpetual violence to himself.

7. Because of the continual presence and opposition of evil in the whole course of Godliness : in the first act of conversion there is great violence in breaking off from sin, and turning to Christ ; but sin is not perfectly subdued, nor is grace perfected in that moment : but sin remains still in us, and the measure of grace is but weak and imperfect : there is and will be a perpetual conflict between sin and grace, that godly men have great need to keep up a daily exercise of their holy violence, to beat down sin, and to keep up grace in its strength and vigour : *when I would do good, evil is alwayes present* : these twins are allwayes struggling in the heart ; that of necessity we must exercise holy violence : for as our violence abateth, so sin grows stronger and stronger, and grace becomes weaker and weaker : As while the hands of *Moses* were lifted up to Heaven, *Israel* prevailed ; when they were let down, *Amalek* prevailed over *Israel* : so it is in the

the whole course of our lives; while Christians (*Jehu* like) march on with an holy fury, and pray fervently against their lusts, grace prevails; otherwise sin gets the upper hand.

8. Because there is no getting Heaven without violence, no entering into it without striving and pressing into it: Cities and Castles are not won by setting down and standing before them, and looking on them, but by storming, and venturing hard for them: so neither is Heaven taken by wishing and woulding, but by our strongest endeavours, and holy earnestness to win it. Nothing below Heaven is gotten by wishing and woulding: it is not he that wisheth that he may be rich, but he that will be rich, and laboureth hard to be rich: the sluggard in the *Proverbs* did desire food, but had none, because he folded his hands in his bosome, and would not take pains: Heaven will not drop into any mans mouth: Heaven is compared to an high hill, *Psal. 132*. there is no ascending up but by holy violence; *faciles descensus Averni*: it is easie to go down to Hell.



CHAP. VI.

Sheweth whence this holy Violence ariseth.

NOW would you know whence this holy violence ariseth, I shall shew you.

1. It proceeds from the Spirit of God : holy violence is not from nature ; we can no more move our selves without the spirit, than a dead man can move without the soul within : till God draweth, we cannot run : till God enable us, we cannot think a good and an earnest thought of Heaven : a Christian can do all things through Christ strengthening him, *Phil. 4. 13.* the word ἐνδυναμῶν signifieth Christ making me able and potent ; for holy violence is the spiritual fiery temper of the soul, which none can kindle in us but the spirit, which is compared to fire ; it is he that makes us fervent in spirit : God is *purus actus*, a pure act : where the spirit of God is, there is activity, strength and vigour.

2. It cometh from the deep and serious apprehensions of their own dangerous state and condition ; they feel their sins a burden too heavy for them to bear ; therefore they must have Christ upon any terms, to
free

free them from that intolerable burden; they fear hell and damnation, and are affrighted with the dreadful thoughts of burning in Hell: therefore do they strive to enter into Heaven, press into it, and take it by force; they will be earnest for Heaven, that are terrified with the fears of hell; none but the man-slayer runs to the City of refuge; none but the condemned person is violent in pursuit of a pardon: none but he that is sick unto death is violent for recovery from death and sickness: and none but the burdened sinner is violent for pardon and life eternal: men are careless of the salvation of their souls, because they are fearless of the damnation of them: the whole see no need of the Physitian.

3. It proceedeth from strong convictions and perswasions of an absolute necessity of an interest in Christ, that they must be damned, if they have not Christ: then they are impatient, restless, violent for an interest in Christs satisfaction and righteousness. The Prince of *Orange* made his Army to be valiant and violent in fighting, when he told them, that either they must eat up the Army of Spaniards before them, or they must drink up the
Sea

Sea which was behind them ; either they must all die or conquer : so when a mans conscience shall tell him, either you must have Christ, or else you must drink up the brook of Gods wrath ; then are they eager and violent for Christ, I must have Christ, or else I am undone eternally ; none but Christ, none but Christ can save me : when men see that there is an absolute necessity of a thing, they will have that thing, if it be to be had for love, money, or labour : an absolute need of Christ puts men upon taking Christ upon any terms.

4. From their sight of Heaven by faith : they see by faith the incomparable riches of Christ, and the unutterable things which *Paul* saw in Paradise ; they see the things which are not seen, and are eternal : that the winning of Heaven will make them a sufficient and eternal amends for all their pains-taking to get it. Let a General tell his Souldiers, that there are inestimable treasures in the besieged Castle, and say to them, Win it, and all shall be yours ; how violently will they storm the Castle, but they will have the treasure in it ! so God having promised in his word to all that shall strive to enter into Heaven, and shall
press

press into it, to all that shall give diligence to work out their salvation, to all that shall hunger and thirst after him, that they shall have Heaven and all the glory, joy and happiness in it ; all the goodness laid up therein shall be theirs ; these promises make believers to aspire to be diligent, to be violent for Heaven. What faith faith and hope ! If I can win heaven, I shall have all that is in Heaven : what is ease, life, liberty, to Heaven ! farewell all that I may obtain the Kingdom of Heaven. I will have Heaven though I die in and for the pursuit of it : Heaven will make amends for all that I can do or suffer for the gaining thereof.

CHAP. VII.

The reasons why the Violent shall take Christ and Heaven.

THE Reasons why Christ and Heaven shall be taken by the Violent ;

Reas. I. Because they are the men that put a just and true value on Christ and Heaven ; they esteem them above a thousand worlds, that they are worthy of all doing and suffering for

for the obtaining of them. All men say that Christ and Heaven is worth the having, but they do but say so, and not judge so; if they indeed value Christ and Heaven, they would be more eager and earnest after them, then they are; they would like hungry men break through stone-walls, break through all difficulties, but they would draw waters out of the fountain of salvation: he that valueth Christ and Heaven more than others do, will do more for Christ and Heaven than others; Christ will have men know and judge, that he is worth the having, and that Heaven is exceeding worthy of all our labour and diligence: such as thus value Christ and Heaven, and accordingly labour to obtain them, their violence shall not be in vain: Heaven shall be the reward of holy violence.

Because they are the men who come up *Reaf. 2.* to Gods terms, upon which he offers Christ and Heaven; the promises of Christ and Heaven are made to them that hunger and thirst, that are heavy laden, that mourn, that give diligence, that strive, that press into Heaven, that suffer for righteousness; he that cometh up to these terms, shall have Christ and Heaven: God will make good

good his word of promise. It is observable, what connexion is in Luk. 16. 16, 17. *Since that time the Kingdom of God is Preached, every man presseth into it* : and it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, then one tittle of the Law to fail : press thou therefore into Heaven ; sooner Heaven shall be no Heaven, than the promise shall fail such as press into it.

Reas. 3.

Because they adventure all for the gaining of heaven, therefore they shall have it : they labour for heaven, therefore they shall obtain, they suffer all for Heaven, it shall be their reward : they will be Godly, their hearts are set upon Christ and Heaven, they make them their only design, their *unum necessarium*, their one thing necessary : they will have Christ, and will have no nay, they will not be put off : therefore Christ will bestow himself, and what he hath upon such importunate wooers : they love Christs above all things, therefore they are worthy of him, *Matth. 10. 37.* they are not worthy by any merit : for so even Angels are not worthy of Heaven : but they are worthy, that is, they are fit for Christ and Heaven.

Here is great difference between worldly things and Heaven : Men may labour
and

and expect them, but their expectations may fail them; but in Heavenly things not so; mans labour, hopes and expectations shall never make him ashamed; he shall have the glory he expecteth and laboureth for.

CHAP. VIII.

THIS may inform us, that Godliness ^{use 1.} which shall bring men to Heaven, is not a course of formality and ease; it is not a lazy, idle, and fruitless profession; it consisteth not in formal performances, or (to use the words and thoughts of too many) it consisteth not in a moderate profession, which is nothing else but an outward and negligent course in duty: no! that Godliness that must bring us to Heaven is an earnest, eager, violent profession, a violent performing of duties; it is striving and wrestling with God, as *Jacob* did: it is contending and striving against sin; it is an earnest striving to be more and more godly; it is bearing earnestly, praying fervently and believingly, and a doing what we do for God with all our strength and with all our might; it is

Cc a stout

a stout resisting of sin, as well as a praying against sin : it is not only a praying for holiness, but a striving and following after holiness more and more.

Oh thou who art a lazy and formal Christian, this is sad Doctrine for thee ; thy formality will not bring thee to Heaven : thou shalt never win Christ with a few formal performances ; we say, Soft and fair will go far ; it is not true in our journey to Heaven. God in the Levitical Law ordained, that the neck of the consecrated Afs should be broken ; the reason of the command is taken from the nature of the beast : it is a dull and slow creature : the signification of that command is to shew how God abhorreth slothful, sluggish and lazy servants, and that God will break the neck of the soul of the dull and lazy Christian.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

An Exhortation to be violent for the Kingdom of Heaven.

SECT. I.

LET us all be Exhorted to be violent *Usc 2.*
after an holy manner, putting away all sloth and sluggishness, all formality, and carnal moderation in the things of Heaven: let us say to our own hearts, This laziness and negligence in religious works will never bring us to Heaven: I will give you some Motives which my Text hath; ponder the words seriously, and then neglect to exercise holy violence if you dare.

1. It is for a Kingdom. What man is there that will not use a just and lawful violence for a Kingdom, if it be to be gained by violence? but Kingdoms are not for every mans taking.

2. It is for the Kingdom of Heaven, in comparison whereof all Kingdoms in the world are but dung-hills and mole-hills: as far as heaven is above the earth, so far is this kingdom above all earthly kingdoms: Souldiers will be violent for a little booty;

shall not we who believe that the kingdom of Heaven is prepared for the violent, be violent to take it ?

3. It is the greatest Kingdom, it is the richest Kingdom, it is an everlasting Kingdom ; all Kingdoms of the earth shall be burnt up with fire at the last day, but this Kingdom shall endure for ever and ever : To these let me add,

4 Either you must take heaven by force, or hell will take you by force : all men shall either be Kings with God, or damned slaves with Devils in hell : shall not we be violent to escape hell ? where is the man that will not use his force and might to escape death and damnation ?

5. Shall we not be violent for the Salvation of our lives, of our souls, and be violent for life eternal ? men will give skin for skin to preserve life : shall not we be much more violent for life eternal ?

6. Consider how violent Christ was to win thy soul ; it made him sweat drops of blood ; shall not we then be violent for our own souls ?

7. Do you believe that there is a Kingdom of heaven or no ? if you think there is not such a Kingdom, then never be violent to gain it , it is labour in vain ; but if you

you believe there is such a Kingdom, then shew your faith by your works, by your violence in getting it. That man is a silly traveller that dares not ride apace through a Town for fear of the Dogs barking at him; that is a cowardly Souldier that dares not shew his valour for his King and Country, for fear of mens hatred and envy: he is not worthy to take Heaven that dares not be eager and earnest in seeking it for fear of the worlds hatred and malice.

SECT. 2.

HOW may a man stir up this violence *Quest.*
in himself?

I told you but now, This is the gracious *Sol.*
work of the spirit of God, it is he that worketh his holy eagerness of spirit in us; beg of God that he would make us active for Heaven.

2. Set faith on work which will clearly represent to the mind the invisible glory, joy, pleasures, riches, happiness of the Kingdom of Heaven: faith is an ambitious grace of Heaven, and aspires after it; we believe not, therefore we are not earnest; we see not heaven by faith: it is a sure hope and certain expectation of Heaven,

that puts life and vigour into our dull souls : Souldiers are prodigal of their blood for gain : Merchants and Mariners endure many a storm for gain, so will believers for heaven.

3. Set your affections on the Kingdom of heaven : if your affections be fixt on it, you will be eager to take it : he that sets his affections on earth, will be careless of heaven : Moles can no more live in the clouds, then Stars be fixed in the earth.

4. Labour to convince thy heart of thine own guilt, and of Gods wrath, that thou art every moment in danger of being swallowed up of hell : thou knowest not how soon death and hell may take thee away by violence : had every one of us these perswasions and convictions, how would we strive and press into Heaven ! we should see with our eyes how the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence : most of us fear not hell, therefore we are lazy and careless in seeking heaven.

Finally, This speaks terrour to two sorts of men :

1. To such as cannot endure to see men more violent for heaven than themselves ; that speak all evil of such, and do what they can to take men off from heavenly eagerness,

eagerness, like the Pharisees, who will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven themselves, nor suffer others that are entering in, to enter ; if you will not be violent for the kingdom of heaven, let them be that will be : let others go to heaven, and you may go to hell ? as we must live by Scripture, so God will judge us by Scripture. What answer can you give to God, who oppose and revile such as are eager and earnest for heaven, when Christ shall call to thy remembrance these words : *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force* ? if formal lazy Christians shall be cast into hell, what will the end of such be, who are enemies to thy violence for heaven ?

2. Woe to such who are violent for hell : that burning prison of the damned suffereth violence, and there are many that take it by force : are there not too many among us who will be wicked, who will do what they please ? that as violent Christians break through all impediments in their way to heaven, so there are violent wicked men who break through all impediments which God lays in their way to hell, who break through all Gods commands, counsels, reproofs, threatnings, judgements,

judgements, break through all checks and warnings of their own consciences : neither the word of God, nor conscience, nor the convictions of the Spirit of God, nor friends, nor Ministry, shall hinder them, but they will follow and fulfill their lusts. It is but a damning say they, let us eat, and drink, and swear, and roar, and swagger, for to morrow we shall die, and Ministers tell us we shall be damned. Oh swine, and not men that will thus violently run through all impediments into the Sea of Gods burning and eternal wrath!

FINIS.